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The American Record Guide

VOLUME 24, NO. 2

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TWENTY FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION



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For Operaphilic Gourmets: Mixed Grille

Souvenirs of Opera (Second Series):

"Idomeneo"—*Fuor del mar* (Mozart). Hermann Jadlowker (tenor). "L'Africaine"—*O paradiso* (Meyerbeer). Giuseppe Anselmi (tenor). "Andrea Chenier"—*Un di m'era di gioia* (Giordano). Mario Sammarco (baritone). "La Gioconda"—*Suicidio!* (Ponchielli). Amelia Pinto (soprano). "Ero e Leandro"—*Romanza di Ero* (Bottesini). Amelia Pinto (soprano). "I Lombardi"—*La mia letizia infondere* (Verdi). Léon Escolais (tenor). "Otello"—*Ora e per sempre addio* (Verdi). Léon Escolais (tenor). "Otello"—*Piangere cantando* (Verdi). Aino Ackté (soprano). "Mireille"—*Anges du paradis* (Gounod). Emile Scaremberg (tenor). "Manon"—*Fabliau* (Massenet). Georgette Bréjean-Silver (soprano). "Werther"—*Quelle prière de reconnaissance et d'amour* (Massenet). Dinh Gilly (baritone). International Record Collectors' Club (318 Reservoir Ave., Bridgeport 6, Conn.) L-7012, ten-inch, \$4 plus postage (.50; .75 west of the Mississippi).

▲ONE is grateful for so much un-hackneyed material as this program contains, though it is a rather miscellaneous assortment, without any thread of continuity. The nine famous singers represented vary widely in their voice qualities and styles—no danger of monotony here! The Jadlowker selection is a celebrated and rare one. To my own minority ears it has always seemed a *tour de force* but hardly one of the singer's best efforts. Accomplished vocalism it assuredly is, with its skillfully matched runs and its amazing trill, but in other music Jad-

lowker actually has sounded better. The tone, to me, is hard and driven. After this, the Anselmi selection is particularly relaxed and free. The style, as always, is polished and elegant. Sammarco gives us perhaps the most famous passage from one of the roles he created, and I do not recall ever hearing more eloquent singing from him, though the recording could be more forward. In the "Gioconda" aria there is a very heavy piano behind the Pinto voice, but a splendid voice it is, particularly in the chest register. Her treatment of the music is very free. A real surprise is the first aria of Escolais, with its beautifully pointed tone and the magnificent high C-sharps. The delivery is easy, the style convincingly Italian. It is another surprise, then, to hear him in his more accustomed French in the "Otello" scene. I remember, years ago, IRCC's first attempt to transfer the Ackté recording from its original hill-and-dale to the then standard 78 rpm shellac. This new try is far more listenable, though the voice remains somewhat wooden. One senses that there was more to her singing than the recording was able to catch. Scaremberg's "Mireille" aria may be rather too intense, but his tone has a fine ring. As for Bréjean-Silver, she has some lovely tones as well as some shrill ones. Her execution is neat, the total effect of her aria (written for her to use in place of the *Gavotte* in "Manon") quite pleasing. The Gilly sounds like an early electric recording. There is a unique steely quality in this singer's voice which must have created problems for the engineers. His aria here is only mildly interesting, but the singing is big and alive. —P.L.M.

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On the cover: Jan Sibelius (1865-1957). Photo from Finnish National Travel office.

A SURFEIT OF popularity having insured the usual reaction, the music of Sibelius was not much in vogue at the time of his death.

Gone now, too, are Serge Koussevitzky and Olin Downes, who were the composer's staunchest advocates through years of assault by the New Criticism. Memorial programs aside, then, we may expect that Sibelius will remain in eclipse until the pendulum of fashion swings back.

This does not mean, fortunately, that the Sibelian will have to do without. Quantitatively, at least, the phonograph has always done rather well by the Finnish master (although I am still waiting for an LP version of *Belshazzar's Feast*, the slow movement of which seems to me the very quintessence of the composer's art).

You may be interested to hear that our own Arthur Cohn, as a member of the erstwhile Stringart Quartet, took part in the American premiere of the *Voces Intimae* at Philadelphia back in the thirties. He will have some worth-while things to say about the new Budapest recording.

The simultaneous issues of Stravinsky's *Perséphone* went on board ship with Abraham Skulsky, who sailed for Europe the day after both came in. His review had not arrived at the hour of our deadline.

A few readers report that their September copies have imperfectly printed covers. The explanation is that our so-called black overlay plate somehow was not in place throughout the press run. We will try to keep that gremlin well in hand.

Please note that this issue has forty pages, compared to thirty-six last month and a nominal average of thirty-two over the years (the large-format sixteen amounting to the same area). I mention this as a reminder that space for our increase in articles and other features is not being borrowed from the review pages.

In the next issue, if the writer survives the ordeal, there will be a retrospect on that annual madmen's *mardi gras* known as the High Fidelity Show. I plan to file a separate report on London's new stereo disc, which will challenge tape in about the same degree as tape has challenged the LP. Turnabout is fair play.

—J.L.

The New Hindemith Opera

By GEORGE LOUIS MAYER

MUNICH

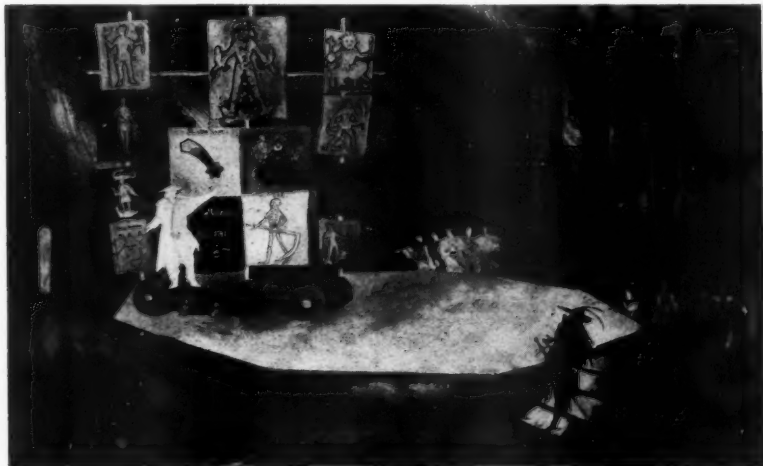
A NEW PUBLIC must be found if Paul Hindemith's latest opera, "*Die Harmonie der Welt*", is to succeed. For this, Hindemith's most ambitious post-war work, is an opera of ideas and ideals. The appeal is much more to the intellect than to the heart. If Hindemith has attempted to give us a musical drama composed of vital dramatic characters and their interaction upon one another, he has failed. What he has given us is a panoramic view of the struggle of Johannes Kepler, the medieval German astrologer-astronomer, to find a scheme for harmony on earth in the complex harmony of the universe. Had Hindemith succeeded in making Kepler a dramatically convincing character, we would have a more harmonious opera.

Perhaps the fault lies in the fact that Hindemith served as his own librettist. A dramatist with theatrical flair might have fashioned Hindemith's ideas into an effective whole. As it stands, it is undermined by confusions and weaknesses which make it bear the same relationship to exciting musical theater as a closet drama bears to a powerful classic play.

The opera consists of five acts with a total of fourteen scenes. The last scene, an allegorical finale bearing the title of the work, takes place in the heavens, where eight of the opera's twelve main characters appear in celestial guise to achieve the harmony which has been impossible for their earthly counterparts. Uncertainty, misfortune, and conflict marked Kepler's own search for harmony. His

A sketch for Act I, Scene I

—Hildegard Steirmetz





Act I, Scene IV —Rudolf Betz

sufferings are those of one who failed in the attempt to find even in his own life—let alone in that of mankind as a whole—a framework for harmonious living. But then, in true medieval fashion, he looks to death for what life has failed to provide, and is rewarded.

Hindemith presents us with vignettes from the last twenty-two years of Kepler's life (1608-30) in a maze of disjointed plots and sub-plots involving his family, historical contemporaries, and typical medieval types. Kepler's mother, Katharina, is a selfish, superstitious woman interested in his studies only insofar as they can contribute to her own belief and traffic in magic and the supernatural. Susanna, his second wife, fails to bring harmony and order into his sphere by love alone. His minister friend, Hitzler, refuses to administer Communion to him because Kepler's views are at variance with his own dogmatism. The young Susanna, his step-daughter, highlights his early losses and grief and serves as the innocent whose childish questions enable him to complete his investigations. The Emperor, Rudolf II, is the disillusioned thinker who has accepted the apparent chaos of the universe in contrast to Kepler's convictions of a higher order applicable to man. And then there is Wallenstein, the power-mad general who cultivates Kepler and his knowledge for his own self-centered, egotistical ends and who functions as Kepler's oppo-

As time permits, the author is a peripatetic opera buff. Otherwise, he is second in command of the Fifty-Eighth Street Music Library in New York City.

site throughout the opera. Further complications are contributed by Ulrich, Kepler's assistant, who eventually goes over to Wallenstein's cause after losing Susanna to his master, and Tansur, a voluble clod, who personifies an ignorant but cunning man granted a little power by assisting Wallenstein's campaign.

Despite all these complications, there is little that is confusing due to one's inability to understand any individual scene. On the contrary, each is clearly presented, even though in several cases more than a single action is presented at a time—via a vision, an hallucination, or a mere whim of the composer. The real difficulty arises from the fact that the threads of the sub-plots are combined into a whole which lacks cumulative effect. Changes in locale and time between scenes involving the same characters also hinder logical development. Attention and interest are captured during individual scenes but none of the characters is given quite enough dimension to grip the listener's imagination and sympathy for the duration of the work.

The scene in which Kepler's mother seeks his protection because of witchcraft accusations contains a magnificent duet between her and the wife. They sit at opposite sides of the stage and each thumbs the Bible for selections supporting her different beliefs and feelings. The following scene, which contains the Mother's trial, has some chilling moments when she suffers the horror of hearing Kepler's brother, her own son, testify against her. She is saved only by Kepler's own arrival with a court order to suppress the trial. Kepler himself then repulses her because of her beliefs. Wonderful choral effects by the confused public begin at the moment when Kepler is denied Communion. But this dramatic incident is weakened by an overlong verbal exchange between Hitzler and Kepler. Oddly enough, one of the

(Continued on page 65)

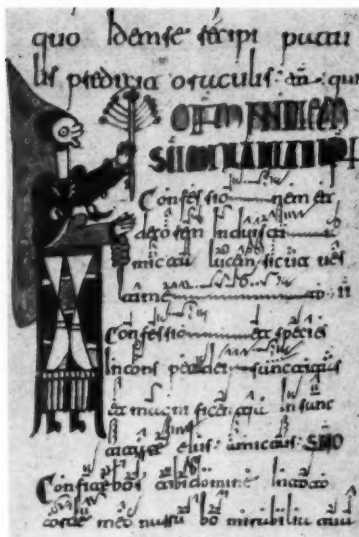
A Plea for Plainchant

By JOHN W. BARKER

IN THE PAST FEW years several record companies have responded to the renewal of interest in Gregorian Chant. The catalogues now list a good forty LP discs on eight labels—three dozen hours of listening. At first glance this seems encouraging for the lover of this remarkable old music. But examination will soon show that much of the output evidences outright distortion, total misunderstanding, and the worst taste imaginable. This fact serves as impetus for the following, which is a plea for more proper awareness of what Gregorian Chant represents.

Much of what is really bad in Plainchant recordings probably comes from a false sense of religiosity. The religious and the musical are inseparable, if not identical, in Plainchant. The music exists for no other purpose than to express religious faith. Therefore, the religious feeling can be expressed in no truer way than by an authentic and faithful attention to the music. Unfortunately, all too often an attempt is made to "enhance" the religious by a sanctimonious sentimentalism which does complete violence to the music, and hence defeats any wholesome religious effect. About the first Gregorian LP on the market was one by Columbia (ML-4394) featuring chants sung by American Trappist monks while—and here lay the catch—the author Thomas Merton unctuously spoke trans-

This is the first of a discographic series in which Mr. Barker will cover—at intervals of two or three months—the evolution of music in the earliest centuries. The author is on the history faculty at Rutgers.



Illumination from a Mozarabic psalter of the tenth century. A primitive form of music notation appears between the lines. Opposite page: St. Gregory dictating to the Deacon Peter (drawing from Hartker's Antiphony, St. Gall, late tenth century).

lations of the texts as the monks sang. Nothing could be more revolting, or more exasperating, to one who wanted to hear some Gregorian Chant.

In addition, there are three musical abominations frequently practiced on Plainchant. The first of these is the tossing in of bells to add "background". As the monks sing these bells clang away as if the scene were laid in a railroad station beside a waiting locomotive. Hardly an illusion to help the music! Second is the unforgivable crime of accompanying Gregorian Chant with an organ. Plainchant should never be accompanied. Its single melodic line has a soaring, otherworldly effect that is destroyed when it is fettered down to some accompaniment. An organ chugging along with it not only sounds ridiculous but also ruins the music completely. Finally, there is the misbegotten practice of having Gregorian Chant sung by female voices. Not only is this inaccurate, since women would never perform in a service (except, perhaps, in their own convents), but the

color of their voices is utterly out of place. Someone once remarked that Gregorian Chant is "sexless music", and indeed, pedantry or not, women's voices cannot hope to capture its true sound. Not one but all three of these abominations are illustrated on a single Period disc (SPL-369). Some others are not much better.

All the bad practices cited above are the products of a complete misunderstanding of the musical or religious essence of Plainchant. This music cannot be supercharged with a sickish religious schmaltz to serve as blinds for the uninformed, or as souvenirs of present monastic life. Nor can the music be performed in any manner other than what is authentic if it is to achieve its effect with success.

Fortunately, a certain number of the LP recordings of Gregorian Chant are presented with integrity, authenticity, and beauty. The Benedictine Abbey of Saint Pierre de Solesmes has been one of the fountainheads of the revival of interest in this music, and so thoroughly have the monks there come to live with it, both in scholarship and in spirit, that their performances, under Dom Joseph Gajard, almost invariably may be relied upon. One must be on guard, however, against contemporary imitations in Gregorian style which they occasionally slip into their recordings. Their old Victor set (LM-6011) is a little stale in sound and has poor notes, but their newer recordings for London (most notably the five-disc LLA-14, less so the singles LL-1464 and 1408) are highly recommended. And if one tires of Frenchified Latin, he may turn with profit to the more forthright and vigorous performances by the monks of Beuron Abbey, Germany, in Decca's wonderful Archive Series (ARV-3001, 3031, and 3050).

Yet good recordings alone are not enough. The average listener is often quite ignorant of the substance, scope, or significance of Gregorian Chant. A chant nowadays may easily give the impression of being anything from a stuffy and meaningless museum piece to a strange and disquietingly haunting piece of exotic music. Neither proceeds from a

healthy attitude. Plainchant is not the primitive product of a crude and backward period of history.

This latter view is bound up with an old misconception about the so-called "Dark Ages". This period is supposed to begin with the "fall" of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and to extend roughly into the eleventh century. The assumption is that everyone at this time was steeped in ignorance and superstition, and that a few ill-educated monks sat in their monasteries singing these moldy chants during intermissions from copying crude manuscripts, while the barbarians roved round the countryside having a high time. Such a stereotyped picture is patently absurd, since no society could sit and stagnate for some seven centuries without any political, intellectual, or cultural activity. Moreover, this picture centers itself solely around a restricted area of northwestern Europe comprising England, France, Germany, some of Italy, and perhaps a bit of Spain; it ignores the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean world. This is its greatest fallacy, for the real center of gravity during this period lay not in northwestern Europe at all, but in the East and the Mediterranean coastal areas. The Roman Empire never "fell" in the fifth

(Continued on page 71)





For Vaughan Williams

Birthday 'Wishes'

By EDWARD JABLONSKI

THOUGH THE long-playing catalogues list an impressive array of the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, it is an imbalanced representation of his vast, rich, output.

All the eight symphonies have, of course, been recorded under the supervision of the composer by London, with a couple of duplications on other labels, in a laudable project that has made these magnificent works by the greatest English composer since Purcell generally and readily available. Spaced as they are through his entire career, they serve as a sort of musical index to his thought and development and, further, establish the fact that Vaughan Williams is one of the eminent symphonists of all time.

His orchestral mastery is, to be sure, unquestioned. Further exemplification of this is the powerful ballet score, *Joh,*

A Masque for Dancing (also recorded by London) and the earlier masterpiece, the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (available on almost all labels). A recently recorded *Partita for Double String Orchestra* (London, again) uses the same orchestral forces as the *Tallis Fantasia* in a secular vein and with undiminished skill.

As to the concerted works, those for violin and oboe have been recorded. So has the brilliant *Piano Concerto*, though it has been unfortunately withdrawn. But there are no domestic recordings of the *Romance for Harmonica* or the *Tuba Concerto*. Both are unpretentious compositions that show the composer at his most relaxed. At the same time both are good music, no less so for their charm.

One or another aspect of humanism is inherent in all the music of Vaughan Williams. But it is most clearly evident in the works for voice that exist in practically every conceivable combination, from simple folk song arrangement to grand opera, and it is this area of the Vaughan Williams corpus that is unaccountably neglected by the record companies. Considering the quality involved, it is one they might well explore.

Taking into consideration the famous English choral tradition, it is remarkable that so few of the fine Vaughan Williams choral works are recorded even in England, where there is no lack of live performances. Also, the systematic practice of English companies in the matter of recording complete operas has not applied to those of Vaughan Williams, at least two of which must be reckoned as masterpieces. The neglect by American companies is another story. Except for a very few, our own labels ignore all contemporary domestic composers. Vaughan Williams' stature by now, however, takes him out of the purely "English" category, so that the responsibility for the recording of his works should not devolve merely upon the English firms.

Now for a few wishes. But first, briefly, a survey of the few already available recordings of Vaughan Williams' choral compositions. Although not strict-

(Continued on page 74)

Record Reviews

THESE IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Couper

J. S. BACH: *Preludes and Fugues in A minor* (B.G. 15:189); *D minor* (B.G. 15:148); *C* (B.G. 15:81); *G* (B.G. 15:169); *A* (B.G. 15:120); Carl Weinrich (organ). Westminster XWN-18499, \$3.98.

▲WITH this disc Westminster's Complete Organ Works of Bach reaches Volume 6, and the results here are much the same as before. At his best, Weinrich is clear, precise, and conscious of the structural elements. At his worst, his playing is uneven and interpretatively quite impersonal. Weinrich's half-staccato style would be necessary on a large resonant organ, but on one of this size it sounds stiff and mechanical. The A minor Fugue is a case in point: such a way of performance requires technical perfection, and Weinrich's unevenness of touch is disturbing, to say the least. The D minor Prelude is marred, in my estimation, by an excessive vibrato which lends an inappropriate saccharine quality to the music. The following Fugue is probably the best playing on this disc; his touch certainly shows more security than it has elsewhere. Cold perfection characterizes the Preludes and Fugues in C, G, and A. Westminster's extra-fine recording brings out the rich qualities of the Organ of Varfrukyrka in Skänninge, Sweden, as well as all of Weinrich's merits and faults.

—D.H.M.

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat, Op. 73* ("Emperor"); Solomon (piano) with the Philharmonia Orches-

tra conducted by Herbert Menges. RCA Victor LM-2108, \$3.98.

Fischer, Furtwängler.....H.M.V. LHMV-4
Serkin, Ormandy.....Columbia ML-4373
Backhaus, Krauss.....London LL-879

▲SOLOMON delves between the lines.

His playing is on a par with that of Backhaus (whose reading is subdued and reflective), Serkin (objective and classical in concept and design), and Fischer (whose reading, one suspects, is dominated



Solomon: "a great performance..."

by the highly elastic sense of tempi and sustained drama of Furtwängler), but with a voice all its own. Happily lacking is the bravura sometimes used as a projective device in this work. The second movement in particular is elegiac in its eloquence. The sound (which responds best on the AES curve rather than the suggested New Orthophonic) is not so laudable, featuring a slightly distant piano tone and a suggestion of fuzziness in the orchestra. But what does this matter in an otherwise great performance? Menges is an able conductor.

—A.K.

A Formidable Five for the Price of Four

BEETHOVEN: *The Five Piano Concerti*; Artur Rubinstein (piano) with the Symphony of the Air conducted by Josef Krips. RCA Victor set LM-6702, five discs, \$15.98 (special price).

Schnabel.....RCA Victor LCT 6700
Serkin.....Columbia 4914, 4738, 5037, 4373

▲**FORMIDABLE** music-making, but Rubinstein's approach here suggests that he is more at home in the romantic style than the classical. Heavy reliance upon the damper pedal; a *dolce* or rubato method of phrasing; liquid tone and cushioned accents instead of crisp, clearly defined delivery—all of these are interpretative devices of the later period. The use of Busoni's edition of the cadenzas (with altered registers, doubled thirds, etc.) only strengthens this impression.

Technically, the renowned virtuoso is in top form, although the same excessive pedaling, which often blurs more intricately scored or technically demanding passages, tends to reduce the effectiveness of his performances. The tempi adopted are fairly standard except in the final movement of the C major Concerto, which I have never heard taken at so rapid a pace (at this tempo the A minor theme sounds more than ever like *Tico-Tico*),

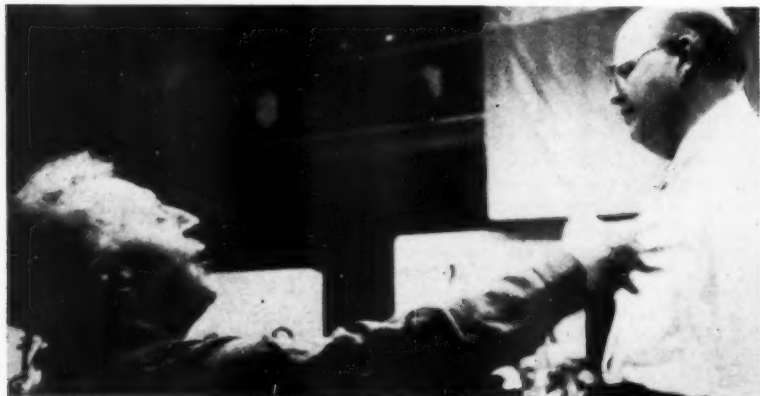
and also the second movement of the Op. 37, in which the painfully crawling definition of *Largo* matches that of Toscanini in Haydn's Symphony No. 88.

Happily (or not, as the case may be), Krips sees eye to eye with Rubinstein. He, too, views these works in a more modern light, employing a rather thickly-colored orchestra and a broad, spineless way of phrasing in which the corners of accents and rhythms are carefully rounded off (notably in the opening movement and rondo of the Second Concerto) and the way in which sforzandos and fortissimos lending contrast and character are ignored.

Rubinstein probes deepest into the soul of the C minor (due perhaps, to memories of a former recording under the stern guidance of Toscanini) and in the "Emperor", but for me he does not provide more meaningful interpretations than do Serkin, Solomon and Schnabel in this music.

The recording is quite reverberant throughout, and at times off-balance. One of the engineers was given to boosting the solo instrument and bringing it closer in, at times rendering the orchestra inaudible. On stereo tape, no doubt, the effect will be stunning. —A.K.

Time out for a playback—Artur Rubinstein and Josef Krips at a recording session



CHAIKIN: *Concerto for Accordion in B flat*; Yuri Kazakov (accordion) with the Symphony Orchestra of the Moscow Region conducted by Veronika Dudarova; **SHISHAKOV:** *Concerto for Balalaika and Orchestra of Folk Instruments*; Mikhail Rozhkov (balalaika) with the State Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments of the U.S.S.R. conducted by Victor Smirnov; **GORODOVSKAYA:** *Suite for Orchestra of Folk Instruments*; **VITOLYN:** *Village Polka*; State Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments of the U.S.S.R. conducted by Victor Smirnov. Westminster WWN-18464, \$3.98.

▲ THERE is nothing in the Chaikin that Pietro wouldn't have included in his repertory. Instead of "Concerto", however, "Piece in the Form of an Accordion" would be more appropriate. There are Russian tunes aplenty and, while none of them are distinguished enough to lift this work out of the "easy-listening" category, they do conjure up kazatskis if you happen to be serving shashlik this season. The Shishakov has more charm—maybe Chaikin would have made out better with a background of folk instruments. Also, the balalaika is subtler than the bayan (the Russian accordion—not the hybrid we know that is crossed with a piano, but the all-button style) and therefore capable of sustaining our interest longer. Anyway, Shishakov's melodies have the sparkle of originality and the solo part shows off all the facets of the jewel-toned balalaika. The Goro-dovskaya suite of four folk-song arrangements and the little filler by Vitolyn couldn't be more graceful, and all are well recorded.

—J.B.L.

CHAUSSON: *Symphony in B flat*; **BERLIOZ:** "Benvenuto Cellini" *Overture*; Paris Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Robert F. Denzler. London LL-1505, \$3.98.

(Chausson)

Paray, Detroit.....Mercury MG-50108

▲ DENZLER's delineation has not the glorious soaring quality of the recently withdrawn Monteux version, but it is nevertheless a vital interpretation of high

merit and warm sensitivity. It is obvious that he really understands Chausson's special bittersweetness. The brooding, melancholy middle movement emerges as a particularly affecting musical experience. The orchestra plays with creditable efficiency, although the tone of the violins is on the thin side. Denzler makes the Berlioz Overture a text for as robust a performance as one is likely to encounter. London's sound is most sympathetic.

—A.K.

● **CHOPIN:** *Ballade in G minor, Op. 23; Mazurkas—Op. 33, No. 3 in C; Op. 30, No. 3 in D flat; Op. 24, No. 4 in B flat minor; Waltz in A flat, Op. 34, No. 1; Études, Op. 10—No. 2 in A minor; No. 3 in E; No. 5 in G flat; No. 8 in F; No. 10 in A flat; Études, A. 25—No. 1 in A flat; No. 2 in F sharp minor; No. 3 in F; No. 6 in G sharp minor; No. 7 in C sharp minor; No. 8 in D flat; No. 9 in G flat; No. 11 in A minor; Wilhelm Backhaus (piano). London LL-1556, \$3.98.*

▲ ALL of Backhaus' intelligence, sincerity, and enduringly fine pianistic command cannot establish an identification with Chopin's music that he does not possess. Although the remarkable septuagenarian seems to have more facility with the Mazurkas, even these retain an inflexible, unbending quality. Somehow the intimate whisperings and melancholy monologues sound forced and strident. Although displaying a nice feeling for melodic design and structural content, none of the Etudes has the needed nimbleness and bounce, due in part to Backhaus' choice of unusually slow and labored tempi. Piano reproduction is a problem that London's engineers have not yet fully solved; however, I found the results improved by switching from the suggested RIAA curve to the AES.

—A.K.

● **CHOPIN:** *Nocturnes—No. 11 in G minor, Op. 37, No. 1; No. 12 in G, Op. 37, No. 2; No. 13 in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1; No. 14 in F sharp minor, Op. 48, No. 2; No. 15 in F minor, Op. 55, No. 1; No. 16 in E flat, Op. 55, No. 2; No. 17 in B, Op. 62; No. 1; No. 18 in E, Op.*

62, No. 2; No. 19 in E minor, Op. 72, No. 1, No. 20 in C sharp minor, Op. posth.; Peter Katin (piano). London LL-1499, \$3.98.

Rubinstein.....RCA Victor LM-6005
Istomin.....Columbia SL-226

▲THIS is Volume 2 of the complete Nocturnes played by Katin. I find it difficult to justify the Briton's assumption that Chopin's metronome was too slow and that, when the composer wrote *lento* (Nos. 13, 16, and 18) and *andantino* (Nos. 12 and 14) or such over the first bar of each composition, what he really had in mind was a more animated pace. Whatever one's opinions may be in regard to Chopin's salon music and the genteel tastes for which he wrote, there can be no denying his superior craftsmanship in transcribing exactly what he chose to say, and the exact pace at which he chose to say it. The Liszts, Thalbergs and other greats of virtuosity were very much in the public eye in those times, and in order for Chopin to remain in vogue he had to display his mettle, which the technical magnitude of his compositions and history itself confirm. But the one structural form in which virtuosity (and the dance styles he adopted, if not their steps) played a secondary role, was the nocturne, where the musical line was expanded and embellished, its tempi retarded, and its voice subdued befitting a hushed soliloquy. It is the element of tempo which Katin overlooks, and although he spins Chopin's lines with fine flexibility and without a trace of bravura, and even in contrasting pastels, the melancholy phrases are pushed and seem short of breath, thus limiting their effectiveness. At best, Katin defines the tempi in their fastest meanings. The album includes the so-called Twentieth Nocturne (posthumous), not always found in the standard collections, particularly in its original form (rather than the 1836 revision) as presented here. London's sound is a bit distant and foggy. —A.K.

F.COUPERIN: *First Tenebrae Service*; Songs, *Air sérieux, La pastorelle* and *Les solitaires*; *Motet, Audite, omnes*; Hugues Cuénod (tenor), Daniel Pink-

ham (harpsichord), Robert Brink, William Waterhouse (violins), and Alfred Zighera (viola da gamba). Concord 4005, \$4.98.

Alarie, Retchitzka
(*Tenebrae*, etc.)...Ducretet-Thomson DTL-93077
Sautereau, Collard
(*Tenebrae*, *Motet*)...Haydn Society HSL-105
Cuénod, Sinimberghi

(*Tenebrae*).....Westminster WL-5387

▲CONCORD has taken over many of the masters of the defunct Allegro label and is reissuing them. This one used to be ALG-91. In its day it was one of Allegro's best releases, but it has long since been put in the shade by the three subsequent recordings of all three of the lovely *Tenebrae Services* (the Haydn Society disc including also the *Audite, Omnes*, and the Ducretet a different motet), although of the three probably only the Ducretet-Thomson one is still generally available. The saving feature of this older record is the attraction of the three songs, which are very appealing. Cuénod is at home in this music as are few others, and Pinkham is as always the sensitive ensemble director. The sound represents no improvement over the original, but then that was passably good. One improvement, however, is in the packaging: Allegro was always notorious for its almost non-existent notes and texts. Concord gives us a sturdy double-sleeve, extensive notes, and both texts and translations, where the original gave only the latter. —J.W.B.

DANKEVICH: "*Bogdan Khmel'nitski*"; Mikhail Grishko (Bogdan Khmeknitski); Vladimir Matveyev (Posol); Boris Gmyria (Krivonis); Victor Borishenko (Bogun); Rudolf Belitski (Ganzha); Nina Goncharenko (Varvara); Larisa Rudenko (Solomiya); Lilia Lobanova Rogacheva (Helena); Semen Kogan (Lizogub); Pavel Geichuk (Gavrila); Karl Papernik (Tur); Ivan Morgul (Pototski); Mikhail Romenski (Lentovskii); Vassili Babenko (Commandant); Boris Puzin, Ivan Klyarkun (Captains); Rudolf Belitski (Niva); Pavel Ivanov (Zhurba); Dmitri Gnatyuk (Koshovy); Vassili Babenko (First Fugitive); Yakov Ostroshenko (Shai-

tan); Ivan Klyakun (Second Fugitive); Anatoli Okhrimovich (Koshukh); Kiev Taras Shevchenko Theater Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Piradov. Westminster set OPW-1403, four discs, \$19.95.

▲THE composer, Konstantine Feodorovich Dankevich, is a native of Odessa, born in 1904. He is said to be one of the outstanding musicians in the Soviet Union today, and this patriotic Ukrainian opera has enjoyed considerable success. First produced at Moscow in 1951, it was revised and brought forward again two years later in Kiev. The writer of the short biographical note introducing the elaborate illustrated Ukrainian-English libretto tells us that "*Bogdan Khmelnytski*" "reflects native thematic material as well as Ukrainian history". It may be assumed, therefore, that the folksy flavor of the score is to a considerable extent imparted by the use of actual traditional melodies. At least two were recognizable to me—one being the famous *Slava* that served both Mussorgsky and Beethoven in other days. The composer of this opera obviously knows not only how to put such melodies together, but also how to write effectively for voices and to orchestrate proficiently. He knows, too, the standard operatic models, and is not ashamed to write in a style hardly more modern than Tchaikovsky's. Patriotic feelings run high in the libretto, and the music sustains a considerable degree of tension throughout a good portion of the opera's formidable length. One who does not know the language can hardly be expected to thrill to the music as the composer's compatriots apparently do, and one does get a little tired of the oft-repeated patterns in the score. The cast is thoroughly capable; the singing is generally better than in many recorded performances from the Soviet Union. Grishko in the title role deserves praise as an artist of admirable dignity, and Gmyria makes the most of one of the melodiously effective arias. The tenor Borishenko has a good healthy voice and style, while Goncharenko stands out among the women especially for the aria of the dying Vavara. Technically the set is excellent.

—P.L.M.

ELGAR: *Enigma Variations, Op. 36;*
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis;* Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Steinberg. Capitol P-8383, \$3.98.

(*Enigma*)
Toscanini, N.B.C. RCA Victor LM-1725
(Vaughan Williams)
Boult, Phil. Prom. Westminster XWN-18249
Stokowski RCA Victor LM-1739

▲NOT the least impressive aspect of these performances is the tremendous improvement that is manifest in the tonal and articulative quality of the Pittsburgh ensemble, or at least its string section, which is featured in this release. Steinberg has done an admirable job and may well be proud of the results. A broader interpretation of each dynamic and tempo marking would have provided a greater degree of contrast in both performances, to be sure. A stronger definition of *ff* in Variation I of the *Enigma*, for instance, would have facilitated a real diminuendo to *ppp* at the variation's close. Likewise, a firmer incisiveness in the fourth variation, a bit more boldness in the seventh, and a lighter quality to the third, would have added salt and pepper. These quibbles aside, Steinberg's strings have a lustrous sheen and they play in a broad, expansive style. Those in the control booth, too, knew well what they were about. —A.K.

•
FRANCK: *Symphony in D minor;*
Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor LM-2131, \$3.98.

Monteux, San Francisco RCA Victor LM-1065
Ormandy, Phila. Columbia ML-4939

▲THE oftener one listens to Munch in repeat performances of given works, the deeper one's impression of an erratic musical temperament that is not entirely governed by esthetic convictions. Not only do intensity and coloration fluctuate to a wide degree, but tempi, phrasing, and the very structural concept of a piece seem, on successive occasions, to be those of musicians of opposing views. In the present case, the rather bland and commonplace reading of the last movement does not suggest that it flowed from the same baton as did the

fervent account of the opening movement. Although the middle section seems a bit introspective and soft-spoken, I do not find the contrast objectionable. But the inconsistent pallor of the finale leaves one perplexed. Disdaining the lyricism of the opening D major theme (conducted at a rather slow *Allegro non troppo*), the grandeur of the B major section (expounded here by the strangest, most nasal sounding brass ensemble I've yet heard in this music), and the inherently soaring character of the climax—all of which cry out for recognition—Munch seems fascinated by the contrapuntal aspects of the movement's construction, and indeed these are admirably exposed in bold relief. Tonally the Bostonians are in top form. However, Munch seems to have adopted an old Koussevitzky habit of stressing the first trumpet above the rest of the ensemble in histrionic passages. The recording as such is excellent.

—A.K.

●
GLUCK: "*Alceste*"; Kirsten Flagstad (Alcestis); Raoul Jobin (Admetus); Alexander Young (Evander); Marion Lowe (Ismene); Thomas Hemsley (High priest, Apollo, Infernal deity); Joan Clark (Eumelus); Rosemary Thayer (Aspasia); James Atkins (Herald, Oracle); The Geraint Jones orchestra and chorus conducted by Geraint Jones. London set XLLA-49, four discs, \$19.92.

▲IN the preface to this original Italian version Gluck states, in case his music may leave any doubts, that he is going to make song the servant of poetry. Vocal display, instrumental interludes, ornamentation—these are to be sacrificed to the text, and recitative and aria are to be welded together. Some of the conventions of his time Gluck is unable to avoid. Characters are neatly paired, and Apollo descends from heaven as the *deus ex machina* who brings a happy ending. But what is convention in the face of such music? Here are large structures in which "dry" recitative, arioso, chorus and aria are bound by intricate patterns of musical and textual repetition, while a strong sense of harmonic logic cements

these long scenes together. All of this repetition and slow flowering of musical idea demands time for the music to work itself out according to its own logic, and it is this sense of music measuring time in a generous scale and not afraid to walk slowly that characterizes this masterpiece. It is this same long measure of time that makes the work a difficult one for our age, bound as it is by the second hand and the suburban time-tables. It is a hard work to perform. It demands patience from the listener and the most severe self-discipline from the performer. Its rewards are a serenity and loftiness that vanish when they are hurried. In this performance there are moments of achievement and moments of the broken spell. Mme. Flagstad has, as is well known, a voice capable of dealing, at least in a physical sense, with Alcestis' long phrases—some of them lying so very low—and she, with her calm temperament, is willing to take her time. If only she could bring dramatic conviction as well as suitable style to the role, she would be a great Alcestis, but as usual she leaves one with a feeling of something unfulfilled. Jobin's Admetus is acceptable vocally, but both stylistically and musically he treats his role with the devices of a later period and makes one think of sentiment where sentiment is out of place. Young's singing is better; he has a lovely voice, good taste and warmth. The other singers are passable, but vocal difficulties, which show so clearly in this music, are quite apparent. The chorus, the backbone of the work constructively speaking, is very good. It has a lovely tone, one that avoids hardness in the search for brilliance, and it phrases nicely. This is no doubt due to its conductor, who leads what is on the whole a well-paced performance. The sound is good. —J.B.

●
GRIEG: *Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16*; **MENDELSSOHN:** *Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25*; Ania Dorfmann (piano) with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. RCA Victor LM-2102, \$3.98.

(Grieg)

Rubinstein.....RCA Victor LM-2087
Lipatti.....Columbia ML-4525

▲THE lady does herself credit with these superior accounts of two well-known staples of the concerto repertory. She brings to both another kind of flexible precision and sensitivity than Rubinstein's, depending on subtlety of phrasing and color values rather than bravura. If the Mendelssohn hasn't quite the desirable sprightliness it is nevertheless the most nearly definitive version now in the catalogues. Dorfmann is brilliantly abetted by Leinsdorf and the Philadelphians—from whom it is nice to hear an orchestral timbre different from their usual. —A.K.

GRIEG: *Jeg elsker dig, Op. 5, no. 3; Eros, Op. 70, no. 1; Millom Rosor, Op. 39, no. 4; Der gynger en baad paa bolje, Op. 69, no. 1; Hytten, Op. 18; vol. 2, no. 3; Det forste mode, Op. 21, no. 1; Jeg giver mit digt til Varen, Op. 21, no. 3; Med en primula veris, Op. 26, no. 4; Med en vandlilje, Op. 25, no. 4; Endrom, Op. 48, no. 6; Liden baht deroppe, Op. 39, no. 3; Fra Monte Pincio, Op. 39, no. 1; Liden Kirsten, Op. 60, no. 1; Den Aergjerrige, Op. 26, no. 3; Kirsten Flagstad (soprano) and Edwin McArthur (piano). London LL-1547, \$3.98.*

▲FLAGSTAD was always at her best in Grieg. It was as if she were giving everything she had to show the world that the much belittled nationalist composer really was an important man, that the poetry he set had a musical beauty of its own. To hear her pronounce the texts was an experience in itself. In this Grieg recital she is very nearly back in her old form: only occasionally is there any sense of strain. For one small criticism, I would be just a little happier had the singer not made all the repeats in the songs. So moving a mood-picture as *The First Meeting* would be better sung only once, and I feel this is true of a number of the songs. In the case of *I love thee* the repeat is particularly unfortunate, as it seems to have been introduced so that the German translation could have a second stanza. There is no repeat in the authoritative Hansen edition. —P.L.M.



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HONEGGER: *Le roi David*; Suzanne Danco (soprano); Marie-Lise de Montmollin (mezzo-soprano); Pauline Martin (mezzo-soprano); Michel Hamel (tenor); Stéphane Audel (narrator); Choeur des jeunes de L'Eglise Nationale Vaudoise and L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet; **STRAVINSKY:** *L'Histoire du soldat* (suite). London set XLL-1651/2, two discs, \$9.96.

Honegger.....Ducretet-Thomson DTL-93004/5.

▲THE Honegger work recounts the life of the Biblical psalmist by means of a spoken narration, recorded here in French, and a series of musical episodes. Only a few of the latter are given any extensive musical development, and even then it is accomplished by the constructive devices found in the music of Bach. The other pieces, shared among soloists and chorus, are short, lyrical, and beautifully scored. The contrast between the two ways of writing is quite marked but does not lead to stylistic incongruity, since the work is loosely-knit in its basic conception. This is not the first recording. Honegger himself conducted the work for Westminster (this album was reissued recently on the Ducretet-Thomson label), and the two versions vary considerably. The narration of the new edition is more spirited than that of the old; on the other hand, the juxtaposition of text and music is better timed in the older recording and follows the score more closely, sometimes at the expense of dragging speech. As a whole, I prefer the soloists of the earlier recording and, since the work lies low for most tenors, find justified the use of a baritone voice where the score specifies tenor. In matters of tempi the versions disagree; some movements Ansermet takes quite slowly, but in others he moves along faster than does Honegger. Ansermet takes more liberties with the score; he makes a few small cuts and slightly redistributes the voices in the last chorus. But his orchestra and chorus are more brilliant in sound and better blended, and one can hear many delightful orchestral effects inaudible on the earlier discs. Generally speaking, the new performance is livelier and more colorful than the old,

while the old is more faithful to the score and closer to the intent of the composer.

—J.B.

●
HAYDN: *Symphony No. 101 in D* ("The Clock"); **WAGNER:** "*Lohengrin*"—*Preludes to Acts I and III*; "*Die Götterdämmerung*"—*Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey*; Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Arturo Toscanini. RCA Camden CAL-375, \$1.98.

▲IT was not until late in life that Toscanini adjusted to recording methods. His symphonic output in pre-NBC days, therefore, was meager. The present release, in fact, completes RCA Victor's reissue of his N. Y. Philharmonic performances. Rehearing confirms that our loss is enormous, for in at least two of the offerings on the disc at hand (let alone others), the revered Italian set an early standard of excellence that not even he could duplicate in later recordings. This is particularly true of Haydn's "Clock" Symphony, in which the *circa* 1929 sound (remastered, for it reproduces best on the RIAA curve) is surprisingly good. Toscanini's infallible sense of weight, proportion, balance, and mastery of inflection makes this one of the greatest performances ever. The same may be said for the "*Lohengrin*" Preludes (in which the Maestro's humming is quite audible). In the *Rhine Journey* (without the Weingartner cut, thus sustaining dramatic continuity, and with the intelligent Humperdinck ending) we are once again given a masterful lesson in the application of weight, and in the extended crescendo as a dramatic entity. The same may be said for the Act I Prelude from "*Lohengrin*". The kind of orchestral tone we got to know so well in the NBC Symphony recordings was already evident; it was full-bodied and tightly integrated, not voluptuous like Philadelphia's nor liquid like Boston's, yet beautiful in its own way, indulging neither in excessive shakes nor vibrati. Victor has my gratitude, and that of many others, I am sure, for this release. Would that there were more in prospect.

—A.K.

Lully in Context ---'Sheer Delight'

MOLIÈRE-LULLY: *Le bourgeois gentil-homme*; complete acting cast (in French), with vocalists, instrumentalists, choir, and orchestra of Le Collegium Musicum de Paris; Roland Douatte, director. London XLLA-47, three discs, \$14.94.

▲IN the year 1670 Louis XIV and his court at Versailles witnessed the première of a new entertainment under the title of *Le bourgeois gentil-homme*. The title is hardly unknown today; we are all familiar with the work as one of Molière's most popular plays, and music lovers all know Richard Strauss' incidental score. But this familiarity disguises the fact that we have forgotten the real nature of what *le roi soleil* really saw. The work was not simply a play, it was a *comédie-ballet*, a play with music.

Such an arrangement was characteristic of the theater in France at the time. The French had a passion for the ballet, and of this passion the crafty, Italian-born Lully was always quick to take advantage—this in a nutshell was perhaps the real cornerstone of his success. Thus the play was written with the express idea of interpolating music at every opportunity, and most especially music for balletic purposes. Hence the many musical situations in the play. The collaboration of Louis XIV's greatest comedy writer and his greatest composer must not be brushed aside in favor of the fame of the writer alone. In recording the play with Lully's score London has not merely come up with a happy combination, but has restored to us in authentic fashion the proper balance of the play with the music which was conceived as an intrinsic part of it.

The music for the play proper consists of an *Overture* and some ten numbers. There are vocal pieces ranging from brief to long and elaborate, and including the funny dancing lesson. The tantalizingly short orchestral pieces serve as dance interludes during and between the



acts. And there is the hilarious setting of the "Turkish" ceremony which plays an important role in the plot. The only extended musical material, however, is the *Ballet des nations* which occupies the entire final side of the set. This opens with the lengthy chatter and songs of spectators, but centers around songs and dances by representatives of three nations, Spaniards, Italians, and Frenchmen (Poitevins)—a typical Louis Quatorze music-and-dance grand finale. The music is all performed admirably and fits perfectly into its context.

In resurrecting this music, however, London does not make the mistake of letting it overshadow everything else. For all the interest in Lully's score, the play's the thing here without doubt. And it is in this respect that the set particularly excels. Of all the rapidly multiplying number of such recordings, few have captured so totally the illusion of stage action in sound. The players all know exactly what they are doing and do it with consummate skill and zest. The original French is a joy to hear. The text is included in the set, along with the English translation published by Penguin Books, so that there is no excuse for any listener's not knowing what is going on. The sum is sheer delight on all counts.

—J.W.B.



Van Beinum: "beautifully defined . . ."

A Fine 'Das Lied' From Amsterdam

MAHLER: *Das Lied von der Erde; Leier eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano), Ernst Häfliger (tenor), Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Eduard Van Beinum. Epic set SC-6023, two discs, \$7.96.

▲ HERE, at last, is a technically adequate recording of Mahler's vocal masterpiece. With exceptions to be noted, it is possibly the finest available interpretation as well.

This is the third time *Das Lied* has appeared on LP, but only one other version is currently listed. To recapitulate briefly, Bruno Walter has led the Vienna Philharmonic, both pre- and post-Hitler (1936 and 1952), in the work, and Otto Klemperer recorded it with the Vienna Symphony in 1951. The latter (Vox PL-7000) is out of print in the United States, and the 1936 performance (Columbia) has never appeared on LP, though its processing was begun for the Entré series. Thus the 1952 Walter (London LL-625/6) is Epic's only competitor.

Klemperer took fifty-two minutes to Walter's fifty-eight and, though the result

fitted nicely on a single microgroove disc, a feeling of hurry predominated. Van Beinum uses a round sixty minutes, and his interpretation, beautifully defined and modeled, is fully the equal of Walter's classic rendition. I personally feel that his more just appreciation of *caesurae*, sardonic contrasts, and other Mahlerian devices makes it even more nearly ideal. Amsterdam, after all, possesses a Mahler tradition quite as illustrious as that of Vienna herself, and the musicians of the Concertgebouw seem to live and breathe this music as naturally as they eat and drink. The great orchestral interlude near the end—Neville Cardus declared to be a dirge which by comparison "makes all other dirges merely so many public ceremonials or State occasions for the expression of a commonplace grief"—acquires a perfection of line and structure here that raises it to an almost unbearable intensity.

When we come to the singers, the picture is not quite so pleasing. In the opening salvo of oriental pessimistic epicureanism, *The Drinking Song of Earthly Woe*, Ernst Häfliger does not strain in the too familiar manner for the passionate intensity called for in the score, but he does not quite achieve it, either. Despite some inevitable bawling, Julius Patzak (London) was more compelling. On the other hand, in his two later, more lyrical songs, *Of Youth* and *The Drunkard in Springtime*, Häfliger is quite at home. The participation of Nan Merriman, however, gives rise to serious reservations. Her singing in the longest (twenty-eight-minute) section, *The Farewell (Der Abschied)*, is far too loud almost throughout, as can be seen by a few simple facts. Of a total of 230 vocal bars in this movement, only twenty-six are indicated to rise above *piano*, yet Miss Merriman sings *forte* most of the time (including the several passages marked "very tenderly"), usually increasing to *fortissimo* near the top of the stave. At "*O sieh, wie eine Silberbarke*", the poignant major third between voice and first clarinet is not even perceived. I cannot understand how a man of Van Beinum's sensitivity could permit this, especially in a recording session as

distinct from a public performance, and after beautifully sculptured renditions of her other songs, *The Lonely One in Autumn* and *Of Beauty*. *Der Abschied* therefore has yet to be done adequately on LP, for both Elsa Cavelti (Vox) and the late Kathleen Ferrier (London) shared this fault to a considerable degree, only Kerstin Thorborg (Columbia) remaining in distant memory as an indication of what can be accomplished.

On the technical side, there is no contest. The Columbia suffered from concert-performance shortcomings for which Dr. Walter was moved to apologize in the accompanying album notes. The Vox dates from that company's sonically undernourished period, which is to say that it is especially lacking in bass. In the London, an even more unfortunate circumstance attendant on Miss Ferrier's too loud singing in *Der Abschied* was a serious degree of technical distortion on nearly all high notes on side three which no repressings could remove. At the beginning of the final passage, "*Die liebe Erde allüberall*", which Mahler pleadingly marked "*ppp!* Without crescendo. N.B.", and which Miss Ferrier and Miss Merriam both sing *fortissimo*, the ugliness of London's sound is quite unbearable; the Epic engineers have taken it all in their unswerving stride and reproduced this artistic distortion with as perfect fidelity as they have rendered everything else in this ravishing score.

In the *Songs of a Wayfarer* Miss Merriam is on her very best behavior, and yet even with Van Beinum she cannot achieve what he and Eugenia Zareska did in an English Decca 78 made in the forties with the London Philharmonic (and never transferred to LP). Zareska's was one of the truly great Mahler interpretations of our day, with a tragic intensity in the lower register and a pure, clear beauty in the upper that were quite unforgettable. Lacking this, Miss Merriam nevertheless benefits from Van Beinum's searching concept of this youthful song cycle, which remains intact and immediately identifiable after the ten intervening years, and it is the best I have yet heard. The Epic sound quality is fully equal to the rest

of the album, revealing every intimate detail of Mahler's iridescent orchestration.

This work has been recorded no less than seven times, but the only other version available here today is that of Norman Foster (baritone) and the Bamberg Symphony under Jascha Horenstein (Vox PL-9100). Mahler's text for the *Wayfarer* is of course intended preferably for the male voice, and those who might wish to have this (or both genders) should note that the HMV recording by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and the Philharmonia Orchestra under Wilhelm Furtwängler, which is quite superior to the Foster, is due for American release by Angel later this year.

A Mahler enthusiast of international reputation, Mr. Diether has contributed numerous articles on this composer's music to The American Record Guide and also to the leading scholarly journals.

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MENDELSSOHN: *Quartet No. 4 in E minor, Op. 44, No. 2; Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 80; Manoliu Quartet;* Epic LC-3386, \$3.98.

(Quartet No. 4)

Endres String Quartet.....Stradivari 615

▲OF considerable interest to the enthusiast will be the Sixth Quartet which, amazingly enough, receives its first recorded performance here. It is a late

composition, completed just before Mendelssohn's death in 1847, and to those who think of his works as mostly pleasant, light salon pieces, this quartet will come as a revelation. Highly passionate, tragic, at times even savage, the music reminds one of late Beethoven in its intensity. Both this remarkable composition and the earlier Fourth Quartet are impressively set forth by the Manoliu. I am not familiar with this organization, but judging from the present performances I should very much like to hear more of their work. Heartily recommended to all chamber music collectors. —I.K.

MARCELLO: *Concerti "La Cetra": No. 2 in E; No. 3 in B minor; No. 4 in E minor; No. 6 in G; Concerto in D minor for Oboe, Strings, and Thorough-Bass; I Musici; Sabatino Cantore (oboe soloist in the Concerto);* Epic LC-3380, \$3.98.

(Oboe Concerto)

Goossens, Philharmonia.....Columbia ML-4782

Zanfani, Virtuosi di Roma.....Decca DL-9674

▲MOST of this disc is devoted to a first recording of four *concerti grossi* by Alessandro Marcello (c.1684-c.1750), elder brother of Benedetto (1686-1739). They are quite striking in their beauty and originality, and particularly interesting in comparison with the music of the composer's contemporaries. Something of a musicological puzzle exists in connection with the final work on the record—the D Minor Oboe Concerto listed here as being by Alessandro Marcello. It will be found to be exactly the same composition as Benedetto Marcello's concerto for the same instrument in C minor, which J. S. Bach had transcribed for solo harpsichord as well. To make matters even more complicated, the slow movement is played in the present version with the embellishments found in Bach's arrangement. The question of who wrote what and which is the original concerto is presented and argued logically (but inconclusively) by program annotator Klaus George Roy. As music, however, there is no problem, for this is one of the loveliest oboe concertos in the repertory. The performances are excellent, and so is the sound. I.K.

MEYERBEER: "*Les Huguenots*" (abridged); Renée Doria (Marguerite de Valois); Jeanne Rinella (Valentine); Simone Couderc (Urbain); Guy Fouché (Raoul); Adrien Legros (Saint-Bris); Charles Cambon (Nevers); Henri Médus (Marcel); Gérard Bourréli (Meru); Vincent Martinez (Tavannes); Pierre Sanchez (Cossé); Fortuné Moréna (De Retz); Gilbert Glaziou (Une Dame d'Honneur); Académie Chorale de Paris; Padeloup Orchestra conducted by Jean Allain. Westminster set OPW-1204, two discs, \$9.95.

▲WESTMINSTER'S publicity understates the case in calling the present release "the only available version of this colorful opera on LP", though in doing so they overlook the Eterna patchwork performance, which is in several languages and not always in the proper keys. Although I understand there is an Italian version on the way as well, this is not only the first modern "*Huguenots*"; it is also the first Meyerbeer opera to be recorded as a unit. So saying, I hasten to add that it is another understatement to call this an abridged performance. Actually it is no more than a selection of the principal airs and duets, for the most part omitting the choral sections. This is, as a matter of fact, a serious shortcoming in the set, for we thus lose the sense we should get of Meyerbeer's flair for the theater. His was, before Wagner, a kind of union of the arts, though Wagner had little use for his methods and results. His operas were grand in the fullest sense of the word, with drama, scenery, staging and poetry—for in his day librettist Scribe was highly considered as a poet—all of them important. But one thing the new recording will probably do, and that is to revive the old speculation as to whether today's audiences would warm up to Meyerbeer. I suspect, somehow, that if this performance were standard, they would not. The thing sorely needed is the grand manner, the broad dramatic style of singing that is so rare today. On the whole, alas, this is an unexciting performance, for all its good intentions. Of the singers the best is the veteran Médus, who proclaims the famous Luther chorale *Ein'*

feste Burg (upon which, incidentally, the overture is built), his famous *Piff Paff* aria, and his part in the Valentine-Marcel duet with a real sense of style. Fouché as Raoul displays a fine voice, though in the softer passages it is not altogether solid in tone. He has the necessary high D flat, and he is most successful when singing loud and high. Of the women the best is Couderc, as Urbain the page. But she sings her famous aria rather carefully, misses the caressing line its principal melody should have—and what a lovely melody it is! Her florid passages sound more like work than coquetry. Doria's Marguerite is a good try, but her voice is on the shrill side, thin on top and not always true to pitch. Rinella's Valentine is altogether inadequate with it spread, unprepossessing tones. The duets in which she sings do not sound as though they had been much rehearsed. One point of interest is the light the set throws on Meyerbeer's orchestration. The indicated viola d'amore in the great tenor aria, however, seems as usual to be an ordinary viola.

—P.L.M.

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MOZART: *Cassation No. 1 in G, K. 63; Cassation No. 2 in B flat, K. 99;* M-G-M Orchestra conducted by Arthur Winograd. M- E-3540, \$3.98.

▲ANOTHER long-range project! The jacket announces that this is Vol. I of "The Complete Orchestral Cassations, Serenades and Divertimenti of Mozart", and thus Winograd, already hyperactive, carves out a sizable new task for himself. It should be one worth following. Not that this beginning is pure gold. The tempi are sometimes pushed, and Winograd lacks a certain deftness this music needs, though he does not miss the beauties of slow movements such as the lovely second Andante of K. 99. The jacket notes deserve special commendation. M-G-M continues, inexplicably, to favor a rather deadish quality of sound. —J.W.B.

●
MOZART: *Concerto No. 17 in G, K.453; Concerto No. 25 in C, K.503;* Denis Matthews (piano) and the London Mozart Players conducted by Harry Blech; Capitol P-18048, \$3.98.

Serkin, Szell.....Columbia ML-5169

▲THESE are relaxed, easygoing performances, generally a little slow in tempi and rather spineless. Thirty-eight-year-old Denis Matthews' playing is technically excellent, sensitive, and yet strangely introverted; his most impressive attribute is a beautiful but almost constant limpid touch. One can, however, have too much of a good thing, with the result in this performance of a lack of variety—insufficient contrast between soft and loud passages. The orchestral work is good, and so is the sound, but my own preference is for Serkin and Szell. —I.K.

●
MOZART: *Symphony No. 38 in D, K. 504; Symphony No. 39 in E flat, K. 543;* Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer. Angel 35408, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

(K. 543)

Walter, N. Y. Phil.....Columbia ML-5014

▲THE long wait for a definitive version of the K. 504 has come to an end. The unpredictable Klemperer has provided a K. 543 of almost equal beauty, nearly matching Walter (except in the final movement) and putting the heavy-footed

Beecham to shame. What's more, Klemperer includes the written (but seldom played) repeats of the first half of each movement without losing one iota of sustained interest. Stylistically, neither performance is as personal an account as those heard from Walter, nor as driven as Toscanini's or Leinsdorf's, but each is radiant in its humor, warmth, and elegance of phrasing (the slow movement of each is a model). The Philharmonia in general, and its woodwinds in particular, play like angels (no pun intended). The reproduction responds best to the NAB curve on top, and the RIAA on the bottom, suggesting that the recording is not of newest vintage. Nonetheless, the sound is finely balanced and pleasantly clear. —A.K.

●
MOZART: *Symphony No. 39 in E flat, K. 543; Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550;* Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia ML-5194, \$3.98.

(K. 550)

Walter, N. Y. Phil.....Columbia ML-4693

Toscanini, N.B.C.....RCA Victor LM-1789

▲NEITHER reading suggests the superior insight into Mozart's music for which Sir Thomas has long been held in high repute. Both present rather bland personalities, lacking flexibility, warmth, or crispness. The stodgy, labored quality pervading them is due in part to the over-slow tempi elected, though at times one realizes that what is wrong is rather excessive weight. Both third movements suggest a *Ländler* in their misplaced and overstressed accents, and lack of wit or humor. The imbalanced acoustics hardly improve matters. —A.K.

●
MOZART: *Symphony No. 39 in E flat, K.543; Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550;* Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Karl Böhm. Epic LC-3357, \$3.98.

▲DO what you will with this music, the incredible beauty of it somehow still comes through; such was the genius of Mozart. Böhm does little more than establish a tempo at the outset of each movement and beat time thereafter. As a consequence the performances emerge with no more

than a minimum of contrast, variety, depth, soul, or meaning. The fact that the orchestra plays with a beautifully polished timbre is more of a tribute to the Concertgebouw's regular leaders than it is to the credit of the present *Taktschläger*. The only sensitivity present seems to have been in the control booth. —A.K.

MUSSORGSKY-RAVEL: Pictures at an Exhibition; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert Von Karajan. Angel 35430, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

Toscanini, NBC.....RCA Victor LM-1838
Koussevitzky, Boston.....Camden CAL-111

▲PERSONALLY, I cannot agree with Karajan in his general choice of overly slow tempi (Kubelik's is the only other modern orchestral version to occupy both sides of a 12" record). However, one must admit that the strength of his characterizations more than justifies them. The lone exception is the second of the tone-pictures, in which Karajan suggests something less than the medieval *Castello del Vecchio* with its mournfully voiced troubador (a stroke of genius on Ravel's part in assigning the melody to the saxophone). The only place where Karajan's tempo does not carry conviction is at the very outset in the *Promenade* (marked *Allegro giusto*) where stricter adherence to the composer's wishes would have lent authority and emphasis to the proclamatory opening and needed contrast to later repetitions actually marked at slower tempi. Oppositely, however, the portrayal of the weighty ox cart with its huge, clumsy wheels (*Bydlo*) shows rare insight, as does the depiction of two Jews, the one rich and pompous, the other poor and jabbering (*Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle*), in which the solo trumpeter displays high skill and tonal beauty. The *Baba-Yaga* is wonderfully grotesque. Closer adherence to the marked *vivo* of the three quarter bars of *Gnomus*, and to the pianissimo indications in *Catacombae* would have added interest value to what are already readings of bright coloration, as would a helping of humor and playfulness in *Tuileries* and the *Ballet des pousins dans leurs coques*). Karajan's *Great Gate of Kiev* is of massive proportions. His tempo is literally one half that of Tos-

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▲**PROKOFIEV:** *Sonata for Violin Solo; Five Melodies for Violin and Piano;*
RAVEL: *Sonata for Violin and Piano;*
HINDEMITH: *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano;* Joseph Szigeti (violin) and Carlo Bussotti (piano). Columbia ML-5178, \$3.98.

▲UNPREDICTABLY, a valuable recording. Szigeti's recent appearances on LP have been disappointing, but this one is a triumph. Here, again, is the master violinist remembered so vividly from the thirties. Virtually intact is his amazing control of old, his intense concentration, his unique dynamic propulsion. There is all this, plus the authority that goes with most Szigeti performances of contemporary music. The program shows how three great composers of our time dealt with the problem of tonality. Ravel's piece is jazzy, syncopated, full of

flashing colors, naively diatonic. Hindemith's studied work gains its strength from ever-shifting tonal centers. Prokofiev's is a "Jekyll and Hyde" that contrasts lyricism with diabolic dirt—meaning earthy sounds that will bear atonal fruit. Each interpretation may be considered definitive. Bussotti's support is admirable throughout, and so is Columbia's sound. —E.L.

PROKOFIEV: *Peter and the Wolf*, Op. 67; **BRITTEN:** *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Op. 34; Cyril Ritchard, narrator (in the Prokofiev); Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia ML-5183, \$3.98. (See also Tape Reviews.)

▲SINCE this album is slanted for children, it is regrettable that the forces in charge did not see fit to utilize the talents of the delightful Cyril Ritchard in the Britten as well as in the Prokofiev. The Young Person's Guide is available with a narrator's text that serves as an explanatory introduction and as alternate transitions between the variations. Only by using the spoken dialogue does the work take on a real educational value to the young. Even so, Ormandy's performance is superb. Abetted by impeccable engineering (employing, we are told, a new technique, and reportedly recorded not in the Academy of Music but five blocks up Broad Street in the ballroom of the Broadwood Hotel) and also by the nature of the Britten piece, which lays bare the technical proficiency (or lack of it) and tonal qualities of the players, individually and in sections, Ormandy proves beyond question that his orchestra ranks first in the world today. The listener may not find the tonal tintings favored by Ormandy to his liking, but the ensemble's flexibility, precision, and virtually unlimited color range leaves little room for conjecture. One might quibble with Ormandy's interpretation of the *Allegro molto* designation in the fugue of the Britten, but in fairness it must be stated that what is lost in propulsion is gained in clarity. Peter, his family, and his menagerie have never had it so good. Ritchard brings fresh charm, wit, and rib-

tickling characterizations to the familiar lines. A bouquet of lollipops to all involved. —A.K.

•
PURCELL: *Hark! The echoing air* ("The fairy queen"); **HANDEL:** *Like as the love-lorn turtle* ("Atalanta"); *How changed the vision* ("Admeto"); **WOLF:** *Verborgenheit*; *Der Gärtner*; *Auf ein altes Bild*; *Auf einer Wanderung*; **JENSEN, L. I.:** *Allah*; Kathleen Ferrier (contralto); Phyllis Spurr (piano). London LL-1670, \$3.98.

▲THIS brief recital, complete with applause and a short speech by Miss Ferrier, was recorded in 1949 in one of the Oslo studios of the Norsk Rikskringkasting, and something of the excitement that only a live performance generates is here captured. The first side, devoted to Purcell and Handel arias (the Handel sung in English) reminds us again of the wonderful vocal endowments of this singer—her warm, velvety quality, her even scale, and her remarkable flexibility. A breath-taking pianissimo, too, is another technical accomplishment wedded to musical expression. The Wolf songs are handled with admirable taste and impeccable musicianship, but in them an immediate sense of word values is missing, and quite often the German diction is unclear. In both sets of songs Phyllis Spurr at the piano provides accompaniments that seem sympathetic. —J.B.

•
PUCCINI: *La Bohème*; Maria Meneghini Callas (Mimi); Anna Moffo (Musetta); Giuseppe di Stefano (Rodolfo); Rolando Panerai (Marcello); Nicola Zaccaria (Colline); Manuel Spatafora (Schaunard); Carlo Badioli (Benoit & Alcindoro); Carlo Forti (un Sergente); Franco Ricciard, (Parpignol); Eraldo Coda (un 'doganiere); Orchestra and chorus of La Scala opera house under Antonino Votto. Angel set B/L-3560, two discs, \$10.96.

▲ANOTHER role added to the Callas recorded repertory! Mimi, whose pathetic little story has attracted sopranos over the years, is treated in this interpretation with taste and intelligence. Mme. Callas, for all the ballyhoo that attends

her public performances, is extremely respectful of the printed score. She takes few liberties; she is there when she should be; she phrases with musicianship and great attention to detail. In addition, she gives a most convincing set of motives to this Puccini heroine, and Mimi emerges from her hands a rounded character, neither silly nor sentimental, but a true romantic who develops as she experiences love and the approach of death. But for those who love to experience beauty of sound as well as dramatic truth in this opera, this Mimi will be disappointing. The voice is wiry, hard, and wobbly; in a few places it is quite badly off-pitch. Di Stefano does much better by the sound of the score. His Rodolfo is vocally warm and ardent, and if one would occasionally like for him to play less with the beat, one can forgive him such freedom on the grounds of sound alone. Other principals, chorus, and orchestra catch the Bohemian spirit quite infectiously, and the engineers are kind to all concerned. —J.B.

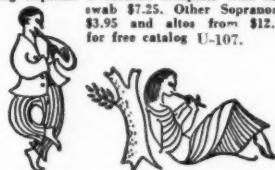
RÓZSA: Kipling's "Jungle Book" Suite; "Thief of Bagdad" Suite; Leo Genn (narrator) with the Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Miklos Rózsa. RCA Victor LM-2118, \$3.98.

▲BOTH these suites are from London film productions, and their professional touch and worn orientalisms are interchangeably dull, even for motion pictures or TV. Of course, the "Jungle Book" automatically suffers comparison with its justly famous predecessor-in-format *Peter and the Wolf*, and the song of Mowgli's mother all too easily brings another parallel to mind—the mezzo solo in *Alexander Nevsky*. At any rate, this composer has done better for the flics in his "Spellbound" Concerto and "Quo Vadis" Suite. Concerto-conscious composers (Heifetz champions Rózsa's Violin Concerto) who are also well-known for their film scores are apt to put much more bite into theirs than is evident on this disc—especially Bax, Rawsthorne, Antheil, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and now Sarian (see under Spendiarov this issue). Genn's handsome voice does little to ruffle the monotony. The sound is good. —J.B.L.

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SCHUBERT: "Rosamunde" — *Incidental music*, Op. 26; "Die Zauberharfe" — *Overture*; *Standchen*, Op. 135; *Psalm 23*, Op. 132; Diana Eustrati (contralto); Berlin Motet Choir; Michael Raucheisen (piano) and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Fritz Lehmann. Decca set DXB-144, two discs, \$9.96.

Dixon.....Westminster XWN-18483

▲THIS is the second complete recording of the "Rosamunde" music; indeed, it is by one overture more complete than the Westminster disc conducted by Dean Dixon. When Helmine von Chézy's preposterous drama was presented with Schubert's music, the composer transferred the overture from his opera "Alfonso und Estrella" (feeling that he needed something more solemn for that work). Then somehow he later allowed another overture, that to "Die Zauberharfe", to be published as "Rosamunde". The confusion thus created abides to this day, for the "Zauberharfe" overture is still popularly known as "Rosamunde", though "Alfonso und Estrella" has the clearer title. Dixon, correctly, gave us the latter in his recording; Lehmann avoids any question by giving us both. This is one reason for the greater length of this recording. Another is that his is so relaxed and restrained a performance. Indeed, it seems longer than it is. Dixon, by contrast, goes about his business vigorously, and he makes the music come much more alive. Even the chorus of spirits, certainly effective in the Lehmann recording, has a bolder, more arresting vitality under Dixon. The ideal, I should say, would lie somewhere between the two approaches, but in a choice of the two the odds are all with Dixon. All, that is, except one. Though Rössl-Majdan sings the lovely *Romanze* with taste, she is outdone by the smoother, more "moon-touched" singing of Eustrati. As an attractive dividend, Lehmann adds two of Schubert's loveliest choral pieces.

—P.L.M.

SPENDIAROV: *Orchestral Excerpts from "Almast"*; **SARIAN:** *Orchestral Scenes from "Melotch"*; Armenian Philharmonic Symphony conducted by Mik-

hail Maluntsian. Westminster XWN-18487, \$3.98.

▲LUSHLY Korsakovish in matter and manner, "Almast" could pass for the work of Alexander Spendiarov's great teacher. The only difference is that instead of "The Tsar's Bride" we have here the Shah's concubine—for that is in fact what becomes of the villainess of the title in this opera. While it is nice to find another major work in the Iron Cache, the real joy in this pairing of Armenians past (Spendiarov died in 1928) and present is Lazar Sarian, born in 1920. The lean, facile orchestration we have come to expect from the products of Muscovite conservatories, plus fresh melodic creativity and dash, make these five scenes from the film comedy "Melotch" one of the more valuable "finds" of the season. Clearly it is among the best motion picture scores ever composed in the Soviet Union or anywhere else. The last scene, called *Fire*, crackles with extraordinary brilliance, and my guess is that you will find at least one of the others equally memorable. Both works are expertly conducted, and the Armenian Philharmonic turns out to be top-rank. The sound is quite acceptable. —J.B.L.

R. STRAUSS: *Einerlei*, Op. 69, no. 3; *Säusle, liebe Myrte*, Op. 68, no. 3; *Der Stern*, Op. 69, no. 1; *Schlechtes Wetter*, Op. 69, no. 5; *Ich wollt' ein Sträusslein binden*, Op. 68, no. 2; *Als mir dein Leid erklang*, Op. 68, no. 4; *Freundliche Vision*, Op. 48, no. 1; *Schlagende Herzen*, Op. 29, no. 2; *Heimkehr*, Op. 15, no. 5; *Befreit*, Op. 39, no. 4; *Die Nacht*, Op. 10, no. 3; *Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten*, Op. 19, no. 4; *Meinem Kinde*, Op. 37, no. 3; Hilde Gueden (soprano) and Friedrich Gulda (piano). London LL-1591, \$3.98

▲AS an opera artist Miss Gueden has the priceless gift of an appealing presence, and she acts well. Her voice is sweet and clear, pre-eminently lyrical, though somewhat on the white side tonally and occasionally shrill. She is musical and has a sense of the words she sings. In *lieder* her manner is much the same. She is not one to subdue her voice or to strive for

shaded effects. She is rather hearty then subtle. The more outgoing songs of the program are therefore the best. Several of the same lieder appeared recently in the Della Casa song program; and the contrast is quite striking. Gueden's approach is positive, her voice open and solid. Della Casa is more within herself. Gueden is helped by the solid and forthright playing of Friedrich Gulda; Della Casa's pianist is reticent, and the recording balance is not good. Gueden's voice has nothing like the charm of Della Casa's but in such a song as *Einerlei* she has the better of the competition. She is convincing, too, in *Als mir dein Lied erklang* and, for contrast, in *Meinem Kinde*. But she is less good in such sustained moods as *Freundliche Vision*, *Heimkehr*, *Befreit* and *Die Nacht*. Incidentally, one might take exception to the commentator's statement anent Strauss the song writer: "...the poorer the poem, the better the song tended to be (a general principle of song writing)"! —P.L.M.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 35*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. Victor LM-2129, \$3.98.

▲TURNING to Heifetz's second LP version of the Tchaikovsky Concerto, we may naturally wonder how the passage of time finds him since his earlier session. The answer is: a bit more ardent, considerably speeded up in tempo, and almost as articulate as ever. The new tempo is taken at the expense of clarity in some of the more fiendish solo passages, but the truth is that at any reasonable speed some spots in this work are bound to sound as if the violinist simply shut his eyes and made a dash for it—and it takes a good man to dare even that. Heifetz's dashes are among the best in the world, so let us not be haughty about them. In the old recording, the Philharmonia Orchestra under Susskind made something more of the important orchestral statements, and certain solo voices spoke more vividly than

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Oliver Daniel, *The Saturday Review*

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Robert Evett, *The New Republic*

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is the case now with the Chicago. But the old sound has a rather nasal tone compared to the fullness of this one, so the choice between the two is balanced rather ticklishly. The wisest course of action, obviously, is to keep the old record if you have it, to buy the new one if you don't. But hear Heifetz. —S.F.

★
VERDI: "*Rigoletto*"; Roberta Peters (Gilda); Anna Maria Rota (Maddalena); Jussi Bjoerling (the Duke of Mantua); Robert Merrill (Rigoletto); Giorgio Tozzi (Sparafucile); Silvana Celli (Giovanna); Vittorio Tatzzi (Monterone); Arturo la Porta (Marullo); Tommaso Frascati (Borsa); Leonardo Monreale (Count Ceprano) Lidia Grandi (Countess Ceprano); Santa Chissari (a page); Andre Mineo (usher); Rome Opera House orchestra and chorus conducted by Jonel Perlea. RCA Victor set LM-6051, two discs, \$7.96.

Tagliavini, Pagliughi, etc.....Cetra 1247
Pearce, Berger, etc.....RCA Victor LM-6021

▲THIS is the kind of performance you might get on an off-night in the middle of the New York opera season: a well-trying war horse, the usual cuts to keep the evening from lasting too long, the customary added high notes, and the services of a seasoned but somewhat weary cast. All of this does little for Verdi, however, and no matter how much one may be confused by the plot, one has to admit that "*Rigoletto*" is the work of a man who knows how to reveal character on stage in music of fire and dramatic intensity. The crux of the matter is the role of Rigoletto, and Merrill, while he sings very well and very intelligently, misses many of its possibilities; he cannot touch Warren either as singer or actor. Miss Peters's contribution as Gilda appropriates Italian mannerism without Italian feeling, and since we all know that she has a good top, she does not have to prove the fact by singing high notes at the end of every ensemble, and most especially she does not have to ruin the lovely close of the *Caro nome*. Bjoerling is an acceptable, if somewhat staid, Duke, but the best work of all is done by Tozzi as Sparafucile. The rich, dark colors of the voice, the fine production, and the exactly-right degree of emphasis make his interpretation of this role memorable. Perlea lets the singers have their heads and manages to synchronize all of the liberties quite capably. The sound, except for a bit of pre-echo, is very brilliant and spacious, maintaining good balances throughout. —J.B.

●
WALTON: *Symphony (1935)*; The Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster XWN-18374, \$3.98.

▲BOULT reveals affection for this symphony. In reading over the score, however, I am struck by the fact that he is somewhat too reserved in his interpretation—there seems to be more pure energy here than Boult is willing to admit. His reading is far from disappointing, though, for the expressive lyric elements are wonderfully portrayed. Westminster's recording lacks resonance ever so slightly, but is otherwise excellent. —D.H.M.

most effective scenes is the very static one between Kepler and Rudolf II in which they discuss their views. It is the only one in which Kepler's ideology really carries conviction and appeal. Despite the Emperor's emotional display, the scene has dignity because of Kepler's integrity, which eventually wins the Emperor's trust.

Musically, the score presents few listening problems. Hindemith does not search for a musical vocabulary new to him or to us. A study could be made of Hindemith's musical theories as exemplified in this score, especially in his use of *musica instrumentalis* for scenes involving Kepler's troubles, *musica humana* for the passages concerning heart and soul, and *musica mundana* for the final scene. However, what the musicologists may discover is well submerged, for the actual sound, refinements and all, is familiar. Formal patterns and devices dominate the structure. Scenes are planned so that quiet ones follow boisterous ones, and tender ones follow straightforward ones. It is not the slowness of the pace that leads to monotony—rather, it is the rapidity. The text, which is at all times clear and understandable, often is propelled by a quick up-and-down recitative pattern punctuated by harsh orchestral chords. In several scenes a driving rhythmic motif reappears every few bars. Then there are atmospheric moments in which the voice, for a change, leads the music along. Most of the time it is the orchestra which creates the movement. It is always when Susanna is involved that the score becomes most conventionally operatic. She has a love duet with Kepler which is strangely free from warmth—to say nothing of passion—and thus emerges quite ineffectually. The Bible reading scene becomes a quartet when Kepler and the child Susanna converse on another part of the stage. And in the last act, it is Susanna who is given the only legitimate aria of the opera. It is accompanied by harp and strings, with winds gently introduced toward the end, and it only just misses being first-rate due to a rather undistinguished vocal line. It is a high point, nevertheless, for it is

one of the few sections which calls for legato singing and thus permits voice coloration and nuance. On the whole the vocal writing is unrewarding.

It is the apotheosis, however, which really disappoints. It begins with a broad and glorious theme as the characters appear in their baroque splendor as the Sun (Rudolf II), the Moon (Katharina), the Earth (Kepler), Jupiter (Wallenstein), Mars (Ulrich), Mercury (Hizler), and Venus (Susanna). However, the main body of the scene is a huge passacaglia which becomes earthbound and tedious just where one expects mystery and radiance. The only movement throughout most of the scenes is that of a procession which circles the stage supporting large astrological signs. Only at the last moment does it soar to a climax.

On the credit side, it must be pointed out that Hindemith has provided operatic orchestral writing that could well serve as a model for composers desiring the technique of handling modern sonorities without obscuring the vocal line. All sections of the orchestra are used with telling effects, both separately and together. The writing for winds is particularly outstanding.

It is unfortunate that a mature musical craftsman such as Hindemith should choose a subject so unsuited to the opera stage and then encumber it besides with such an awkward format. By so doing he has perhaps deprived us of a great modern opera. We do need more of them.

The Munich Festival, which mounted this gala world première, has every reason to be proud of its accomplishment. It is difficult to imagine that any opera troupe in the world could have performed it better. The excellent orchestra responded sensitively to Hindemith's conducting. Helmut Jurgens's predominantly blue settings were handsome and imaginative, as was Rudolf Hartmann's production.

In the Munich performances Josef Metternich created the role of Johannes Kepler. The cast otherwise included Kieth Engen (Rudolf II); Karl Hoppe (Ferdinand II); Richard Holm (Wallenstein); Kurt Wehofschitz (Ulrich Grusser); Josef Knapp (Daniel Hizler); Marcel Cordes (Tansur); Max Proebstl (Baron Starhemberg); Franz Klarwein (Christoph); Liselotte Fölser (Susanna); Hertha Töpfer (Katharina); and Luise Camer (child Susanna).

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Tape Reviews

J. S. BACH: *Prelude and Fugue in A minor; Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme; Erbarm' dich mein, o Herre Gott; PACHELBEL: Von Himmel hoch; PEETERS: Aria for Organ, Op. 51; SCHROEDER: Prelude No. 6, Op. 9; Schoenster Herr Jesu, Op. 11; D'AQUIN: Grand Jeu et Duo; Austin P. Lovelace, organ. Concertapes Stereo 24-3, \$11.95.*

▲HERE is a carefully selected recital of classical and modern organ works that will give considerable pleasure if one's primary concern is good stereophonic sound. Concertapes has done a fine job of engineering. The very good instrument of the First Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois, is presented with realistic clarity. The playing of Dr. Lovelace is most agreeable in the engaging pieces of Schroeder and D'Aquin, somewhat less satisfying in the older works, where the rhythm is insufficiently steady.
—C.J.L.

●
BIZET: "*Carmen*" Suite; "*L'Arlésienne*" Suite No. 1; Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Paray. Mercury Stereo Tape MDS5-3, \$12.95.

▲IT is perhaps significant that the most arresting feature of this very good sounding tape is the acoustical properties of the hall in which it was recorded. This is the spanking new Henry and Edsel Ford Auditorium, now the home of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; and one gathers it is a dandy. Brilliant, yet not too unyielding of resonance, spacious, yet clean of boom and palpably bouncy reverberation, the Ford Auditorium is obviously a most welcome addition to Detroit's cultural life. Naturally, it takes a while for an orchestra and a conductor to get acquainted with a new concert room. This tape leads one to believe that the Detroit Orchestra and Paray are not yet comfortable in their new surroundings.

This hall seems to ask for a bit more warmth of tone than the Detroit instrumentalists have been able to give—at least in this performance. The playing here, as befits the music presented, is



Paray: "good musical manners..."

impersonal and rhetorical; but it lacks an appropriate degree of passion. One can, however, admire the ensemble's precision and the good musical manners its director has insisted on, even though genuine theatrical heat is in short supply.
—C.J.L.

●
BRAHMS: *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77; Erica Morini (violin) and the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Sonotape (Westminster) Stereo SWB-9005, \$15.95.*

▲MORINI is one of my favorite artists, and the Brahms is among the two or three standard concerti in which she really excels. Her music-making tends to a certain sobriety that I find inappropriate to, say, the Tchaikovsky, but few can match her interpretation of the present work—particularly the ease with which she shifts gears for the finale and reverts to her native Magyar style, which is of course the right style for the *echt* Hungarian rondo. Throughout this performance the soloist's justly celebrated tone shines with all its wonted brilliance, and her lofty musicianship is everywhere complemented by Rodzinski's skillful and sympathetic shepherding of the orchestra. The microphone placement seems to have been ideal; the over-all

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—J.L.

GRIEG: *Symphonic Dances, Op. 64*; Pro Musica Symphony, Vienna, conducted by Edouard van Remoortel. Phonotapes-Sonore (Vox) Stereo S-706, \$11.95.

▲THE beginning of this work is delightful, but before the last dance is over one recalls the late Constant Lambert's remark about compositions based on folk melodies. When one has quoted a folk tune, he said in effect, all that is left to do is to repeat it louder. Be that as it may, this music is performed with sweetness and grace by Remoortel and played well by the Viennese orchestra; all that is needed is somewhat more dynamic shading and color. The performance is pleasant enough in its stereophonic investiture, although the color is here and there pallid. There are a few momentary imperfections in my review copy. —C.J.L.

IBERT: *Escales*; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor Stereo ACS-57, \$6.95.

▲SUMPTUOUS orchestral colors, and every shade is separated perfectly, making for a tape of especially ample sonic palette. Comments on the performance will be found in the Record Review pages; see DEBUSSY: *La Mer*. —J.L.

MENDELSSOHN: *Symphony No. 4 in A, Op. 90* ("Italian"); Pro Musica Symphony, Vienna, conducted by Edouard van Remoortel. Phonotapes-Sonore (Vox) Stereo S-705, \$11.95.

▲THE more I hear of Remoortel's work, the more I am impressed. The late Serge Koussevitzky owned this particular piece, to be sure, and no competitor since has challenged the supremacy of his original BSO recording. But none of them has come so close as Remoortel, either. Since the music all but breathes the Italian air, it is notably subject to the (if I may coin a word) audiospatial advantages of stereo, and this performance is beautifully transparent in addition. Exciting in the Koussevitzkyan sense it is not; but then, the younger conductor does not have so virtuosic an ensemble to turn loose.

Whatever the *saltarello* lacks in abandon, surely, it more than makes up for in fidelity to the spirit of the text. And the engineering is fidelity itself.

—J.L.

■
MOZART: *Quintet for Viola and Strings in B flat, K.174*; Budapest String Quartet with Walter Trampler (viola). Columbia Stereo Tape JMB-5, \$13.95.

▲THE Mozart B flat Quintet was his first; it was written in 1773 when he was seventeen, and it is the least significant of the six he composed. Nevertheless, its gracious lyricism and jolly good spirit are tonic and its last movement in particular displays extraordinary invention. Also, it is good to hear it played with such elegance and verve by the Budapest Quartet and Walter Trampler. The recording, however, does not give much of a stereophonic feeling, and one keeps expecting just a bit more "presence". It must be said the sound is absolutely agreeable; it is just that all the advantages of a stereo recording of a quintet are not present. As to sound, Columbia's fine LP is just about as enjoyable as this tape.

—C.J.L.

MOZART: *Concerto in A for Clarinet and Orchestra, K.622*; Benny Goodman (clarinet) with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor Stereo DCS-39, \$12.95.

▲GOODMAN has always played his favorite concerto "straight", with the right-sized tone but without the incisiveness of attack or the nuance to relieve the sameness of level that one is aware of

Rendezvous with Offenbach: Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Josef Drexler. Livingston Stereo 720-BN, \$11.95.

▲EXCEPT for the inordinate prevalence of timpani this must be accounted an unusually fine recording. It is brassy-bright and clangorous from start to finish. Also, the conductor is due high praise for eliciting such a stylish performance from these forces. There is a lift a minute in this marvelous music, and Drexler gets all of them off the ground. The present grouping includes some thirty-two separate orchestral excerpts from the familiar Offenbach operas and operettas.

—J.L.

■
SAINT-SAËNS: *Carnival of the Animals*; Garry Moore (narrator), various animals, and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Sonotape (Westminster) SWB-8026, \$9.95.

▲BETTER not try to follow this performance with the score. Transitional passages are protracted to accommodate interpolations by the popular television personality (the vaguely Ogden Nashish

occasionally in this performance. Still, Munch keeps things going at a good pace and the orchestra and Goodman are *en rapport* all the way. The stereo recording is fortunately close-knit, so that the soloist does not become separated from the total sound. Since this is in the nature of a "big" rather than an intimate performance, the added breadth of stereo and the over-all cleanness of the tape are definite assets.

—E.B.



verses by John Burt pose a sizable challenge to Moore's naturally winning way), and for good measure Westminster's *nonpareil* engineers have spliced in an awesome array of atmospheric grace notes taped at the Bronx Zoo. The kiddies may love it, and doubtless that was the idea. Musically, the result bears no resemblance to the original for all its charming verisimilitude. Predictably, Scherchen approaches the piece as earnestly as if it were a Beethoven symphony, with interesting but sometimes unsettling consequences. The section subtitled *Pianistes*, for example, features the most lugubriously moderate *Allegro moderato* imaginable; one is reminded that the same soloists once recorded *Die Kunst der Fuge*. But this is supposed to be a fun thing, as the saying goes, and surely it is at least that. Didn't the composer himself call it a "*grande fantaisie zoologique*"? I, for one, suspect he would get a kick out of this following-through of his intentions. The sound is wonderful, but the listener with sensitive neighbors can expect to hear from them when the pride of lions lets go at full roar. —J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *The Rite of Spring*; Paris Conservatoire Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. RCA Victor Stereo ECS-67, \$14.95.

▲WHATEVER one's sentiments about the performance (and mine are much the same as those that A. K. expressed in the May issue), there is absolutely no gain-saying the impact of this tape. The "Dance to the Glorified One" is even more hair-raising than it was on the disc,



Monteux: "no gainsaying the impact..."

and elsewhere, too, the spread-out effect of stereo seems to lend a credence to Monteux's spacious tempi that did not come through on the L.P. —J.L.

•
Symphonic Dances: *Waltz* from "*The Sleeping Beauty*" (Tchaikovsky); *Galop* from "*The Comedians*" (Kabalevsky); *Norwegian Dance No. 2* (Grieg); *Pavane for a Dead Princess* from *Ma Mère l'Oye* (Ravel); *Farandole* from "*Arlésienne*" (Bizet); *Pizzicato Polka* from "*Sylvia*" (Déliès); *Sabre Dance* from "*Gayne*" (Khachaturian); *Bacchanale* from "*Samson et Dalila*" (Saint-Saëns); Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra conducted by Felix Slatkin. Capitol Stereo ZF-5, \$14.95.

▲EIGHT favorites of the "light-classical" repertory, played with precision and elegance by a crack ensemble and recorded with every possible attention to their aspects of sonority, which just about cover the gamut of orchestral resources. A stunning tape, whether or not one can approve of this snippet and smidgen programming. —J.L.

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century: true, its western portion gradually evaporated before the barbarian inroads, but at least half of the Empire, its oldest and richest half, lived on in the East for centuries, slowly evolving into what we have come to call the Byzantine Empire. Here there was nothing but continuity with the classical past. Here education, trade, culture, enormous prosperity, literature—all that we can associate with the highest civilization—flourished and endured. The Arab world was an additional sphere of vast importance. The West does not begin to re-emerge to play an important role until the eighth century, and does not really assert itself until the eleventh century. To characterize this period only by what was going on in northwestern Europe would be like judging seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe solely by the American colonies! These ages were hardly "dark", therefore, if one properly regards the eastern European and Mediterranean areas as well.

Even if one were willing to accept the geographical limitations involved in the term "Dark Ages", one faces difficulty. Was northwestern Europe itself so decayed? The extent of ravages of the barbarian invasions has been greatly exaggerated, which often obscures the long persistence of Roman civilization. Yet social, economic, and intellectual decline could not help but set in in view of the political disorder. There is no denying the low state of literature and learning as this period progressed, and the so-called Carolingian Renaissance sparked by Charlemagne (771-814) brought only a limited recovery. The graphic arts were certainly debased, notwithstanding the eventual development of Romanesque art and architecture. On the surface, indeed, there was much darkness.

Still, one must understand an age on its own terms. To a society wrrenched by the economic and political turmoil which marked the epochs of the barbarian migrations and out of which was to emerge gradually a new civilization—a society, moreover, taught contempt for the worldly by the newly triumphant

Christianity—material progress and cultivation could have only a limited attraction. To find the brightness in these "Dark Ages" we must keep in mind the religious element, and we will find it in the religious music of the time.

Consider Gregorian art. Could an age which was hopelessly ignorant, crude, and "dark" have produced a musical idiom so incredibly huge in sheer bulk, so hypnotically beautiful, so simple and direct, yet so sensitive and refined, and so expressive of man's deepest religious faith? Can one call crude a musical art which not only held its own for centuries, and continued to be a source of inspiration and raw material for centuries more, but which survived long neglect to be recognized today as the official liturgy of the Roman Church? Surely no age which could produce Gregorian Chant could be wholly "dark".

There remains now to consider the extent of time dominated by Plainchant. The chants of the Christian Church have their roots in a combination of backgrounds and traditions. Extensive Hebraic, and even Egyptian, elements were joined by a variety of Eastern influences, Christian and earlier. For all their distrust of the worldly allurements of music the Church Fathers could not prevent the use of music in the Christian worship. Music had too long been the natural expression of religious faith to be discarded; besides, through the absorption of non-Christian elements it provided a painless aid to the winning of converts. The Eastern churches early developed their own liturgies. In the West, likewise, a variety of traditions took root. These took the form of local styles, and in addition to the Roman we may distinguish three major types. The first was the Gallican, based on local and pagan Roman backgrounds, and which flourished under the Visigothic and early Frankish rules in Gaul. Related to this was the Mozarabic: this was found in Spain, beginning under the Visigothic rule. Cut off from Christendom by the Moorish conquest (beginning in 711), it was thence able to pursue an independent line of development for several centuries.

Its name comes from the word *musta'rib*, meaning "would-be Arab", generally applied to Christians tolerated under the Moorish rule. Thirdly was the rite prevalent in northern Italy and named after St. Ambrose of Milan (d.397) to whom many of its hymns are traditionally ascribed. More rigid and severe than the Roman style, and uncharitably described by a contemporary as sounding "like the distant sound of a chariot rolling over the stones", this liturgy was never wholly suppressed, as were the other two, and much of it is still in use in Milan.

By the end of the sixth century the variety of liturgical styles had become a source of concern to the Roman episcopacy, which now increasingly was to press for uniformity on the model of its own traditions. The pontificate of Gregory I (590-604) marked the focal point of this movement. Under his vigorous guidance the Church was strengthened and reorganized, and its institutions and doctrines reformed. Not the least of this was his attention to music. The old tradition which credits Gregory with the composition of the liturgy may of course be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. To the other extreme it is even said that he actually disliked music, and gave it his attention only because of the need for reorganization. Whether or not he made any original contributions, Gregory was responsible for a codification and clarification of approved Roman liturgy, setting the standards and limits for the music of the Church. This accomplished, the Roman Bishops were armed with a major weapon in their struggle for acknowledged supremacy in the West and uniformity of Church practice on their terms.

Within the next two centuries the struggle had to a large extent been won. In the liturgical sphere Rome had carried its point: the rival styles of liturgy had been either suppressed or restricted. The Frankish Kings Pepin the Short (751-768) and his son Charlemagne were most anxious to have the liturgy of their realms brought into strict conformity with the Roman—Gregorian—practice.

Over this period of time, let us say from the fifth century up through the eighth,

Plainchant had been running a full course of development. The basic morphology of the chant melodic line remained standard: a generally arching line which began on a leading tone, worked up to a high point, and then fell back to the initial tone. But the melodic style went through three stages, from the simple to the more complex. The chants of the first stage are called *syllabic*, generally having one syllable of the text for each note of the melody. The second, intermediary stage is called *neumatic* (after the neumes, or notation symbols), or semi-syllabic, with the frequent use of more than one note per syllable of text. Finally, melodic development passed into the *melismatic* stage characterized by *melismata* or long phrases on which the vowel of a syllable was extended to melodies of great length and beauty.

Other than a few occasional names, we know little about actual authorship of the chants. The composers of the Gregorian music were interested in the glory of God, and not their own personal glory. Anonymity is therefore the mark of Plainchant, and it must be appreciated that a piece of this music is not the work of an individual but the product of a tradition.

By the ninth century classic Plainchant had reached its highest maturity. This is an interesting point. The richest periods in the development of Gregorian art had been in the seventh and eighth centuries, periods which are hardly considered great ages of culture. For all the brutality and chaos of the time, it was still capable of producing something of beauty and refinement. In the ensuing centuries was to come not progress but decline in music.

The liturgy had been fully developed and the Church was suspicious of any further innovations or additions. Yet innovations could not be stopped, and if the liturgy itself could not be added to it was augmented by adding tropes. A trope is simply an interpolation of one text into another. There seem to have been two general reasons for the growth of this practice. The first was simply the continued need for some expression of originality: adding tropes, tacitly

tolerated by the authorities, provided an outlet for need to compose new pieces while at the same time avoiding and changing or replacing of the established liturgy. The second reason was that by the eighth and ninth centuries the singers, passing more out of touch with the authentic tradition of singing, had begun to have difficulty in remembering the elaborate melismata, and found that adding new texts to the long phrases aided the memory. Gradually, of course, the situation got out of hand. Tropes were added recklessly; not only new texts to old music, but new or old texts together with new music, in various combinations, were inserted bodily and boldly to the established chants. One of the most popular forms of tropes was the *sequence*, an addition to an *Alleluia* melisma. These sequences came to be so numerous that the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century prohibited all but five: *Victimae Paschali*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Aquinas' *Lauda Sion*, Jacopone da Todi's *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, and Thomas of Celano's magnificent *Dies Irae*.

It should be borne in mind that through the high period of Gregorian art here was no general or practicable system of musical notation, save for some crude and sketchy traces of musical shorthand above the texts. Plainchant was a tradition that its practitioners knew by heart. It is significant that the first extensive system of notation, pioneered by the famous theorist, Guido d'Arezzo (c.995-1050) emerged just at the time when Gregorian art was entering its stages of decay. The need for notation in singing the chants was in itself a sign of the decline of the art, so rooted was it in a memorized tradition which was dying out.

The increasing persistence of adding interpolations to the old chants had only weakened and cheapened the tradition, rather than prolonged it. The successive generations were increasingly unable to grasp the spirit of plainchant. The tradition died and the art was no longer a vital, creative force. Plainchant continued to be sung after a fashion, even though the correct style was forgotten and successive editions of the music strayed

further and more clumsily from the originals. Periodic attempts were made to purify the barbarized chants and the idiom was never officially abandoned by the Church, being maintained especially among the older monastic orders. But by the eleventh century new things were in the air: monophony was going out of style and musicians were now experimenting here and there with interesting new combinations of simultaneous voices.

With the dawning of the age of polyphony Gregorian Chant was not entirely abandoned. It was long retained as the basis of the new style, and continued for centuries more both in official use and as an inexhaustible source for thematic material. But the correct performance of Plainchant was barely remembered. As the Middle Ages passed through the Renaissance to the modern era Gregorian Chant was forgotten, perhaps in some part due to the decline in the importance of the monastic life as well as to changes in musical attitudes. Not until the end of the last century, through the work of the Benedictines, was Gregorian Chant again revived and appreciated. Pope Leo XIII recognized that Order's work in 1901, and in 1903, in the bull called *Motu proprio*, Pius X reconfirmed officially the Gregorian literature as the only official liturgy of the Roman Church.

Technical analysis alone cannot bring an appreciation of Gregorian Chant. Historical explanation can, at least, point out the remarkable context in which Plainchant belongs, and thus lead to a better understanding of its real spirit and value. No more profound expression of human religious emotion exists than this wonderful world of Gregorian Chant—our most priceless heritage from the early Middle Ages.

Philip L. Miller is on vacation. In his absence the new vocal releases will be covered by other regular reviewers and by a welcome guest critic, Miss Jean Bowen of the New York Public Library's music staff. A few of Mr. Miller's "leftover" reviews will appear in this issue. He is scheduled to return in time to meet the November press deadline.

(Continued from page 44)

ly so, the first symphony, called *A Sea Symphony*, is within this category; it is a massive, heroically proportioned cantata for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. Three of the *Five Mystical Songs* (Angel) are included in a recital by the St. Paul's Choir; also included is the psalm, "O Taste And See". The austere Mass in G Minor was once on the London label, but is now withdrawn; a fine performance of this *a cappella*, effective handling of the Tudor modal approach is still to be had. on Word 4012. *Sancta Civitas* ("The Holy City"), one of Vaughan Williams' major works, is sung by the Bach Choir of San Francisco on the Music Library label (ML-7049), and well, too, but with an organ accompaniment instead of the full orchestra called for in the score. *Flos Campi*, for viola, voices, and orchestra, employs the chorus as *part* of the orchestra, singing sounds rather than actual words. Based on the "Song of Songs", *Flos Campi* is an interesting and most beautiful excursion into a sensual orientalism. A good performance has been released by Concert Hall. The wonderful, lively *Five Tudor Portraits* (Capitol P-8218) is a lusty and lyrical Elizabethan delight, contrasting in mood—from the vulgar to the tender—and reveals the composer in top form. The *Fantasia on the Old 104th Psalm Tune* (Concert Hall) is a lesser work written for a special occasion.

Alas, the foregoing paragraph exhausts the list of recorded Vaughan Williams choral compositions. And of these, two might well be redone: why not the complete *Five Mystical Songs* and an authentic *Sancta Civitas*?

But this merely scratches the surface.

The early (1905) *Toward The Unknown Region* is still performed; in fact, it will be heard on the fourteenth of this very month (two days after the composer's eighty-fifth birthday) at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Festival. *Toward The Unknown Region* was completed during the same period that Vaughan Williams worked on his First Symphony; both works draw upon the poetry of Walt Whitman for their texts.

Two quite short compositions, the *Benedicite* (fifteen minutes) and the superb *Magnificat* (twelve minutes), the first for soprano, chorus and orchestra, and the second for contralto, women's chorus and orchestra, are frequently performed in churches, though their appeal is not confined to religious settings. Likewise *Dona Nobis Pacem*, a large scale work for soprano and bass soloists, chorus and orchestra. In this plea for peace Vaughan Williams expressed, in words from the Bible, Whitman, and John Bright, the warning that some have felt he was voicing in the apocalyptic Symphony in F Minor.

A modest but altogether lovely work, *Serenade to Music*, for sixteen soloists, was written for a unique chorus made up of England's finest singers. The text is from *The Merchant of Venice*. That this piece remains unrecorded (it was once available on 78 rpm Columbia) is really inexplicable. The occasion (a tribute to the late Sir Henry Wood) being past, the necessity for famous virtuoso vocalists is no longer in force.

Vaughan Williams, like Béla Bartók, is closely and successfully associated with his folk music. Both composers have, each in his own way, helped preserve and bring attention to the subtle beauties of the folk music of their native countries. Both, also, have used the raw material of their research in original compositions of great power and integrity; indeed, it is the very nationalism of their compositions that make them universal.

In 1950, for the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Vaughan Williams

The Vaughan Williamses on a recent Alpine holiday



composed the *Folk Songs of the Four Seasons*, a cantata for women's voices and orchestra. This splendid composition is virtually an anthology of English folk song, all beautifully arranged and orchestrated by Vaughan Williams. Another cantata followed the next year. This time to the words of his wife, the poetess Ursula Wood, Vaughan Williams treated the subject of the creation in *The Sons of Light*. Mrs. Vaughan Williams has furnished fine, sensitive texts for several of her husband's compositions; she has also assisted in the choice of excerpts from others' poetry, as for example from Spenser's *Epithalamion*, which Vaughan Williams used in *The Bridal Day*, for speaker, baritone, chorus, string orchestra, flute and piano.

This Day (Hodie), a Christmas cantata for soprano, tenor and baritone, chorus and orchestra, was completed prior to a visit to the United States by the composer and his wife in 1954. *This Day* is a marvelous score—masterfully imaginative, contemporary and yet timeless. His handling of the massed musical forces is truly remarkable, for example in his use of percussion in the passages describing the arrival of the three wise men. This monumental work should have been recorded long ago.

The most recent composition for chorus that I know of (Vaughan Williams has a habit of making any survey of his work out of date on publication) is *A Vision of Aeroplanes*, a motet for chorus and organ. The text is taken from "Ezekiel" (who saw the wheels). The organ accompaniment contains an astonishing imitation of an airplane.

This run-through does not begin to exhaust the choral works of Vaughan Williams. Nor have I gone into the strictly religious compositions which, though special, are affecting as music whatever one's religious beliefs—or lack of them. It was Vaughan Williams' church music that prompted an atheist to remark: "If this is what Vaughan Williams thinks of God, then God must be truly magnificent."

There are, to date, five operas by Vaughan Williams, six if we count *"The*

Mr. Jablonski is the proprietor of "Unlikely Corners", the popular ARG column which he will resume next month.

Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains", composed in 1922 and later incorporated into the great opera, or "Morality" as the composer prefers to call it, *"The Pilgrim's Progress"* (1951). A setting of the Bunyan allegory, *"The Pilgrim's Progress"* is more than an opera in the conventional meaning—it is almost a religious experience and is unquestionably a masterpiece. Seven songs from the opera have been recorded by Westminster; now the full score should be.

The other operas, excepting one, reveal the composer in a lighter mood, versatility being one of his characteristics. *"Hugh the Drover"* (1914) might be called a folk-opera with its English village setting and the use of folk themes, and also it must be the only opera in existence that features a musical boxing match. *"Sir John in Love"* (1929) is a setting of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, of which the well-known "Greensleeves Fantasia" is the only recorded excerpt. The lightest of Vaughan Williams' operas is *"The Poisoned Kiss"* (1928), a comedy which did not work out too well in the libretto department. But *"Riders to the Sea"* (1931) is a powerful, moving, setting of the play by Synge. Only thirty minutes in length, it is practically a word-for-word adaptation of the original play. The singing is *parlando*, speech-like, throughout—which makes the few climaxes exceedingly effective. The orchestra effectively suggests the brooding, tragic atmosphere of the small cottage which is the setting of the entire opera. The orchestra, too, creates the sound and feel of the sea and wind, and the emotions of the principals. *"Riders to the Sea"* is often performed on campuses. I saw a highly professional production last year at Hunter College. When the Vaughan Williamses visited California during their 1954-55 trip, they were impressed by an excellent student performance at the University of California. In its way it is as much a masterpiece as the best of the others. Why is none of them recorded?

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